PRIESTLY VIRTUE AND ZEAL

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PRIESTLY VIRTUE AND ZEAL

A Study of the Life of St. John Baptist Vianney, the Curé d'Ars and Patron of Priests, Applied to the Sacerdotal Life of Today

BY THE LATE

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WITH PREFACE BY

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BISHOP OF OKLAHOMA

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✠ PATRICK CARDINAL HAYES
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PREFACE

A GOOD priest lives two productive lives on this earth; one ending with his passing through the gates of death, but the other ending only on the Day of General Judgment. The first is a life of labor and even of suffering. It draws heavily on God's grace and his own patience. It is full of worries softened by consolations. It sees some results with mortal eyes, but with anxious heart fears because they are so few. The second life knows no labor and, except perhaps for a little while, no suffering. Need for patience in it there is none, for it is without worries and pain. The full results of the first life are in the second, and the soul feeds on them. The second is the lengthening-out of the first, the reaping of the rewards of zeal and devotion to souls on which fell the seeds of virtue planted before death called the laborer from his mission in fields "white for the harvest."

"What is discouraging you, my dear Bishop?" asked Cardinal Hayes of me one evening while I was paying him a visit. "Many things," I answered. "One is that I feel keenly my responsibility for souls outside the Church but yet in my Diocese. They know neither the Church nor me. They will not hear. They are filled with blind prejudice and repel me. Yet they are confided to my care. To reach them seems a hopeless task."

"My dear Bishop," he replied, "who has told you that God destines you to be a reaper? The work given you to do is the work of the sower. It may be that, in the designs of God, it will be one of your successors

6460

far removed who is to reap. If you do your work as a sower diligently and faithfully, you will have done all that you were sent into your Diocese to do."

I should have thought of that. Of course, the Cardinal was right. I pass the thought on, for it has consolation in it for more than a poor missionary Bishop. It is rich enough to give every priest a fortune in hope, for, when the reaping from the seed he sows is done, there will be a share, a goodly share, to go into the granary of the sower. It is then that he lives his second and most productive life.

John Baptist Vianney, canonized Saint, sowed without thought of reward. He sowed diligently and faithfully and in small places, very small places—his confessional and his little church. He reaped a little before he was called, but he has been reaping a great deal ever since. His influence over his brother priests grows greater every day. They labor for him as well as for themselves, in laboring for God. Vianney's second life is infinitely greater than his first, paying in rich returns, unexpected and never counted upon, for the pain of it. The Parish Priest Saint is still hearing the tales of sinners through other ears; preaching to millions through other lips. There is no demon now to harass him, no fasting to weaken him, no mockers to scorn him. In "the peace that surpasseth understanding," his merits increase without labor and without care.

It is better to think more of the second life than of the first. In fact, it is the thought of the second that most surely makes great the first; for the second gives permanency to its results. To do our work here on earth so well that we project it far into the future, that should be our great aim. It was surely Vianney's, even though, perhaps, he did not pause long enough from labor to take comfort out of the thought of it.

Monsignor Kirlin wrote the book for which I am struggling in these lines to find a worthy preface. I shall fall short, because I am not a Saint like Vianney nor so good an imitator of Saints as was the zealous author. I may say that without fear of hurting Monsignor Kirlin's modesty, for he is dead and this is his last book. The labor of it was done before death chilled his active fingers and gently took the pen out of them. He knew nothing but that labor. It was part of his first, but of Vianney's second life. Those who read and are inspired by it will, in turn, contribute to the author's second life. He deserves it. Many good priests loved him for his zeal shown so often in his writings. They will make that second priestly life of his productive for him by drawing inspirations out of his last conscious effort on behalf of us all, his fellow priests of the English tongue.

All of us cannot write with pens on paper, nor have all who can the time to do it. But we priests, all, we can write God's Holy Name with pens of love on the souls of men. Paper is a destructible thing. The writing on it fades with age. Souls are not destructible; so the writing we do on them lives for eternity to our own everlasting joy.

✠ Francis C. Kelley, D.D., LL.D.
Bishop of Oklahoma

CONTENTS

PAGE

PREFACE BY RIGHT REV. FRANCIS C. KELLEY, D.D., LL.D. 5

CHAPTER

I. CHILDHOOD 11

II. VOCATION 22

III. PREPARES FOR THE PRIESTHOOD 34

IV. HIS ORDINATION 50

V. THE SAINT AS A CURATE 63

VI. PASTOR 81

VII. THE PASTOR AND PARISH SOCIETIES 95

VIII. TRIALS AND DIFFICULTIES 108

IX. PROBLEMS 120

X. RECREATION 134

XI. SERMONS AND BOOKS 148

XII. THE LAST YEAR OF A SAINT 166

XIII. IN GLORY 173

PRIESTLY VIRTUE AND ZEAL

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

ON MAY 8th, 1786, a boy-child was born in the parish of Dardilly, near Lyons, in France. He was the fourth child of his parents, Matthew and Marie Vianney, and at his Baptism was given the names of John Marie, to which was added the name of Baptist at his Confirmation.* The Vianneys were of the sturdy, prosperous farmer stock that has ever been the strength of France. With their neighbors they rejoiced in their heritage of Catholic Faith, and practised their religion faithfully. The peaceful round of their simple lives, devoted to the day's tasks, was undisturbed by the mutterings of the storm which was soon to break, and to devastate their beloved country. The specious doctrines of Voltaire and the Encyclopedists, which in the cities were undermining loyalty to God and King, had as yet little or no effect on the country districts of France. The "Rights of Man" made no appeal to those faithful souls whose lives were given to the service of God. The years that were fast hurrying France to the Revolution flowed smoothly as yet in the outlying eddies of its rural life.

Those years saw the child John Marie Vianney grow

* Jean Baptiste Vianney is the name used in the Bull of his Canonization.

in grace before God and man. His first rational act was to make the sign of the Cross, in loving imitation of his devout mother. The first words his baby lips uttered were the names of Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin. His grandfather's house had been the refuge for all the beggars in the district, and waifs and strays of the road were nightly fed and sheltered there. In such a motley crowd one night there was a poor traveler named Benedict Joseph Labrè, on his way to Rome, where he was to win his saintly crown in direst poverty and suffering. Surely that future Saint, as he accepted food and shelter, must have fervently blessed the house and family which showed such care for the poor and homeless.

The little John Marie soon learned to imitate his family in their care for the poor outcasts. He would take their wet garments to the fire to be dried, wait on them at table as they ate their frugal meal, and help in making a sleeping-place for them in the barn. Reared in this atmosphere of works of mercy, it is no wonder that the future Curé d'Ars learned the lesson of practical love for the poor that was to distinguish him in after years. When he gave away furniture, clothing and food to the poor of his parish he was only living out what he had learned as a child in his father's house. Often the Vianney family went without their evening meal so that the poor might be fed. The Curé d'Ars starved himself literally, on many occasions, that the poor of his parish might have food. Shortly after his installation as Curé d'Ars, M. Mandy, one of his parishioners, called at the presbytery one evening and was greeted by the Curé, pale and ill: "Ah, my friend, you have saved my life. I have nothing to eat." M. Mandy brought him bread, and then found out that three days before, the Curé had given all the provisions in the house to a poor man who had

said he was starving. Such acts were the fruits of the tree of Charity that had been planted in the soul of the Saint in childhood. "Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat; or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed?" These words of Our Lord had a distinct meaning for the Curé d'Ars. The saints are terribly literal!

The Vianney home was not far from the town of Valence, where the Government maintained a military camp. The little boy used to look with wide eyes on the columns of troops as they marched past on the roads near his father's house. The rumbling of the gun-carriages, and the jingling of the horses' harness, the upright figures of the soldiers on the caissons, the bright uniforms of the officers dashing by on their beautiful horses, made a wonderful spectacle for the little country boy. He must have gazed wistfully, as any boy would, on all the show and trappings that were symbols of the great world beyond, of which he knew nothing. Amongst those officers was one his child eyes saw, all unknowing, whose life was to be a vital force in the life of France. This was a second lieutenant of artillery, named Napoleon Bonaparte.

Never was there such a picture of contrasts as history gives of those two lives that touched each other and passed, on the roads of Dardilly. The small boy who gazed at the military cavalcade became the humble priest of Ars, the sweet influence of whose self-denial and piety has come to our own days, and who is honored everlastingly by the Church with the accolade of sainthood. For forty-three years he spent himself and was spent for his people, in the priesthood. The fame of his piety and good works brought him the love and veneration of all classes of men, and won for him the special favor of God by many miracles even in his lifetime.

The undersized, redhaired, sallow-faced seventeen-year old lieutenant of artillery who galloped by in his glittering uniform became the Emperor of France at the age of thirty-five. "Never was a man so hated and feared," says one of his biographers. Dominated by ambition, the most insidious and compelling of passions, he bartered everything worth while in life to gain earthly glory. His religion, his devoted wife, his faithful friends,—all were swept out of his path as obstructions to the fulfilment of his dreams of world-power. For eleven years he deluged the face of Europe with blood, and millions of lives were sacrificed to his prideful glory. When at last his reign ended with his abdication to the hated Bourbons, he was hooted and cursed while on his way to embark for Elba, along the very road on which he had made a triumphal march from Egypt ten months before. The Indian Summer of his glory lasted only one hundred days, and at the age of forty-six came—St. Helena! For six wretched years he watched the waves wash the shores of his prison-house, and at fifty-two he died, of cancer of the stomach.

Both Napoleon and the Curé d'Ars gave the strength of their lives to secure glory—the one, for himself, the other for God. The Emperor lost, the priest won.

Both defeat and victory can be traced to the influence of the home in the lives of both. The tranquil retreat of the Vianney household, in the shadow of Mount Orz, was the abode of deep religious feeling. God was the master of the house and its fortunes, and implicit trust in Him brought peace of soul. The children were taught by word and example that the only thing worth while was the love and service of God. John Marie's mother used to say frequently: "I could have no greater grief than to see one of my children offend God." One day, when repeating this to the fu-

ture saint, she said: "My little John Marie, my grief would be even greater, if it were thou."

As an old man and a priest the memory of his mother's training was deep in his soul. He could instruct the mothers of his parish how to rear their children in the love of God because of the model he had had in his own life. "Virtue passes easily from a mother into the hearts of her children, who readily copy what they see her do," he was accustomed to say when speaking of his mother. The piety of the Curé d'Ars, his love of prayer, his devotion to the poor, his self-denial and penances, his absorbing love of God—all the virtues that made him a saint—can be traced to the influences of his truly Catholic home.

Very different was the home atmosphere at Ajaccio, in Corsica. Napoleon's father was a renegade Catholic. He was at first the friend and soldier of Pascal Paoli, the patriot, but afterwards abandoned him and his cause, turned Royalist and became the paid tool of France. It is doubtful if even at his death he was reconciled to the Church by his brother-in-law Fesch, afterwards the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons. Napoleon's mother was considered the most beautiful woman in Corsica, that land of beautiful women. She was proud, domineering, and anxious only for the worldly success of her family. The fact that Napoleon was not baptized until he was two years old shows what little part religion played in his home. As a boy he was sullen and disagreeable, refusing to take part in the play of the other children. This was caused, no doubt, by his sickly condition. From childhood he was the victim of epilepsy and of the skin-disease which culminated in cancer that caused his death.

At the age of nine and a half years Napoleon was packed off with his sister, to take advantage of a free education in Government schools in France. With no

religious background to cheer him, with the memory of the worldly, scheming home in which he was raised, it is no wonder he took as his favorite authors Voltaire and Jean Jacques Rousseau. It is no wonder history shows him to have been selfish, cruel, untrustworthy and irreligious in his career. Napoleon had lacked in his home-training all that made the boy of Dardilly the Saint of Ars.

Every priest realizes keenly the importance of home training in the spiritual growth of the parish committed to his care. It is at once his consolation and the cause of his anxiety. The parents who realize the responsibility of rearing their family in the fear and love of God, supplement in the home by their words and example the instruction of the priest in the church. There is little danger of children trained in such a home suffering shipwreck in their lives. The care and solicitude of parents in observance of the laws of the Church, attendance at Mass, frequenting the Sacraments, and respect for the authority of their pastors, leave an indelible impression on the minds of the children which serves as an exemplar when they in turn become parents themselves. From such homes come also the religious vocations which maintain the priesthood and the religious orders of men and women.

All the great graces that come from the sacrament of Matrimony and are augmented by the frequentation of the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, are needed in our days to enable parents to safeguard their children against the many and insidious dangers surrounding them. The old-fashioned home is fast disappearing in the radical changes that have swept social life in the past years. When the streets of our cities and towns were badly lighted, and the footways were insecure, parents had little difficulty in persuading their children to remain indoors at night. Those were the

days when the entire family spent the evening together at home. Games were played, one or another of the circle would read aloud an interesting tale, or all would gather about the piano or melodeon to sing songs and hymns. In many homes the Rosary was said by all the family together, after the evening meal, or before retiring for the night. Modern progress, however, has changed all that. Brilliantly lighted streets, facility of rapid transit, and the ubiquitous moving-picture house invite the family collectively, or in sections, to seek recreation away from home.

Besides this, there are other tolls that family life must pay to modern progress. Economic and industrial changes have revolutionized the domestic and business life of a few generations ago. The extraordinary increase in immigration has caused many problems in our cities, and not the least serious of these has arisen from the congestion of the population. In the cities many sections that were entirely Catholic some years ago have been invaded by non-Christians, or by Catholics from the Latin countries, with a consequent scattering of the old families and the breaking of the close parochial ties of long standing. The necessary removals into new and strange neighborhoods have brought about among the young people acquaintances and friendships that are not always desirable, but parents are helpless in the face of the social requirements and demands of their children.

Another reason for the weakening of home ties and influences is, that the increased cost of the necessities of life, the extravagance of dress, and the artificially stimulated desire for luxurious house furnishings and equipment among the middle classes have caused the parents to consent to or even freely to acquiesce in their children going out to work when they should be at school, or assisting in the duties of the home. This

puts them in close touch with individuals who for the most part are irreligious, and many of whom are vicious. The natural result of this association is, in most cases, soon apparent in the home-relations of the young wage-earner. Resentment of parental control, demands for unquestioned liberty of movement due the independence of one who shares the family upkeep, replace the traditional deference which children formerly showed their parents. Here again the parents are helpless in the face of the new conditions.

The need of relaxation for the boy or girl who has been working all day, becomes the excuse for questionable associations in the night hours away from home. Parental remonstrance against late hours and promiscuous friendships brings forth threats, that are often carried out, of breaking away from the tyranny of the home and going elsewhere, that "they may live their own life." This is why parents often choose what seems to be a lesser evil. They shut their eyes and ears, and endeavor to smother their fears, for the sake of peace in the house, and that they may not lose even the tenuous hold they have on their children. Consequently, what ought to be a home is transformed into a place for hurried meals, changing of clothes, and a few hours' sleep. The unfortunate girl in San Francisco who murdered her remonstrating mother, was an extreme instance of a too common condition.

It is in the cities, naturally, that the weakening of human influences—even among Catholics—under the pressure of the pagan atmosphere of our times, is more apparent. History, however, shows that the influence of the city has always, sooner or later, affected the rural sections of a country. Our names of "pagan" and "heathen," as describing the unbeliever, come to us from the fact of the slowness with which Christianity

spread in the beginning in the villages and dwellers among the heather.

In our days concrete roads, the automobile, the telephone, the radio and the mail-order houses have brought the remotest country hamlets and farms into close touch with the city. The simple-minded rustic of the comic paper has given place to the clever, educated scientific farmer whose telephone and radio provide him with the latest quotations, and the news of the world. The smooth-spoken stranger looks in vain for him to sign his name on the dotted line of a contract.

The progress, however, that has brought the latest labor-saving machines, and the latest fashion in clothes and manners to the farmer and his family, has brought also the spirit of resentment of authority and a weakening of home influence. Facility of travel by trolley-line or automobile has made access easy to the village moving-picture house and public dances. Restlessness under parental restraint and the lure of the city life made familiar by film, magazine and newspaper, have wrought almost as much havoc in the homes of the secluded country district as in the congested city. Many is the silent tear that wells up in the eyes of the deserted and lonely parents as they look out on their acres lying neglected, or tilled by strange hired hands. Many the prayer that goes up to God pleading for the son or daughter who has fled from the home to live the life of the city.

The soul of every priest, in city or country, is wrung with the agony of Gethsemane at the vision of sin in his parish. Even as the Master saw, he sees the disaster that comes to the young through the carelessness and indifference of parents to the great privilege God has given them. The priest sees the streets thronged with the offspring of foolish, trusting parents, and the moving-picture places crowded with young people, and

often with children accompanied by their parents, even when the play advertised is questionable and immoral. He knows that the libertine, the drunkard and the auto-bandit are made from the corner lounger and the street prowler who once were innocent boys. He knows that the girls who roam the streets, and frequent public parks and dance halls unprotected, may at first be innocent and seeking only amusement after the day's toil, but he knows too that the soil of the streets will gather on their souls as on their shoes. God's judgment will surely come to the careless parents who find it easier to trust their children than to watch them. They are sowing the wind and they will reap the whirlwind. A mother's tears will not wash clean the soul of the girl she took no care for. A father's anger, when too late, will not give him back the pure boy he allowed to go to ruin.

The priest sweats blood in his anguish at the destruction of souls that he cannot prevent, and he can only weep and pray for those who will not heed his admonitions and pleadings. But, as an angel came to Our Lord in the Garden under the olive trees, and comforted Him, so the bitterness of the priest's agony is consoled. Strong and insidious indeed are the forces of evil, and many there are who succumb to them, but stronger still is the grace of God that makes the influence of the truly Catholic home the protecting armor of those boys and girls whom necessity compels to go out into the world to earn their living, or to share in the upkeep of the family.

Every priest thanks God for the pure strong young men and the gentle modest girls of his parish who attend the services of the Holy Hour, and the Sodality, and the Holy Name Societies. As he stands at the altar his heart is filled with gratitude to God as he sees these young people receiving Our Lord in Holy Com-

munion every Sunday, and many of them every day. When he goes into the church in the afternoon hours, to make his own visit to Our Lord, he looks as fondly as Our Lord Himself on the large number of young men and women, boys and girls, who have come to the Blessed Sacrament in thanksgiving for the graces of the day.

These are the fruits of his fatherly counsels and constant prayer, and as the years of his priestly care increase, the touch of their weight is light indeed in the thought that the Church in his parish is still secure in the hands of these devout souls. Like St. John Vianney, the Curé d'Ars, the influence of their training in childhood will bear fruit in maturity, and with him they will praise God in all eternity.

CHAPTER II

VOCATION

AT THE age when small boys of our time and country are going to school and receiving the incalculable advantages of a religious education, St. John Baptist Vianney was living through the dreadful days of the Reign of Terror, and the almost as dreadful years after.

The bishops and priests of France who had not submitted to the decree of November 27, 1790, requiring the oath of fidelity to the Constitution, were either put to death or driven into exile. The churches that had escaped destruction by the Revolutionists were closed, excepting those in charge of the sycophants who had taken the oath. These men were properly despised by the people, and their ministrations rejected.

There were, however, many noble priests who, while they could escape detection, went about the country saying Mass and endeavoring to keep alive in the land the embers of the fire of faith. Religious men and women who had been driven from their monasteries and convents, aided these heroic priests by instructing the people and holding services of prayer in secret.

The overthrow of the revolutionary tribunal, and the execution of Robespierre on July 28, 1794, mended matters very little; for, although many priests were released from prison and some of the exiles returned to France, the anti-religious laws were not repealed. The battle of Marengo, and the *coup d'état* of November 10, 1799, that put Napoleon's feet on the steps

of the throne, brought a partial freedom to the Church. Even the First Consul, though he slept complacently in the palace of the Luxembourg and declared that "religion was necessary for a people," could not repair the damage to faith and morals that ten years of anarchy and sedulous deviltry had done to France, and the aftermath of which still obtains.

On April 18, 1802, the astute Cardinal Consalvi wrung the Concordat from Napoleon, torn between his reluctance to give up any power and the knowledge that he could not succeed in his ambitions without the Church's aid. By the Concordat official life was given the Church in France, and she breathed once more. Breathed indeed, not freely but hampered and confined by the bands of State that Pius X cut so heroically in 1905.

Our Saint had reached his sixteenth year when the Concordat was signed. The dioceses of France were re-established, the churches opened to public worship, and liberty was given once more to the clergy for the ministrations of their office. Always of a deeply religious bent of mind, St. John Baptist rejoiced at the new state of affairs; but his soul had been seared by the years of persecution of the Church at the hands of his countrymen, and his whole future life was colored by the tragic events of those dark days.

When an aged priest, the Saint would often recall the occasions when he had accompanied his devout father and mother, frequently to great distances, that they might hear Mass. The news would be spread among the faithful that Mass would be offered by one of the proscribed priests at a certain secluded spot in the woods, or in a remotely-situated house. The congregation would gather from all quarters, scouts having been posted to give notice of danger from the republican police, the Holy Sacrifice would be offered up and Holy

Communion distributed. The noble priest who thus ministered to them in danger of his life would speak words of encouragement, and together all would pray Almighty God to send better days to His Church. We can readily imagine the impression that such a scene would make on the mind of the young Saint.

He had reached his twelfth year when his modesty and devotion attracted the attention of the Abbé Groboz, one of the heroic priests who had come to Écully, (one league from Dardilly,) to say Mass. Learning that the boy had never received the sacrament of Penance, M. Groboz at once heard his confession and arranged that he should be given instruction for his First Holy Communion. The young boy was placed with other children under the care of two members of the dissolved Institute of St. Charles, Sisters Deville and Combes. These devoted women went to the houses of several families in Écully and there, by stealth, taught the children their catechism. The following year young Vianney remained in Écully until he had received sufficient instruction, and at length the day arrived when he received Our Lord for the first time in Holy Communion. In after years the Saint loved to recall that dramatic scene. The Mass was said just before the dawn, in the home of Madame de Pingon. It was in the harvest time, and great wagons filled with hay were drawn across the door and the windows to hide the service from unfriendly eyes.

In the years immediately following his First Communion the young Saint was busily engaged in the heavy toil of farm work, but as often as the occasion offered itself he attended Mass and received Holy Communion. In February, 1803, M. Charles Balley was appointed Curé of Écully, and that date marks the turning point in the life of St. John Baptist Vianney. This learned and zealous priest was one of the con-

fessors of the Faith who during the dark days had gone about ministering to his people. He was soon attracted to young Vianney, who came so frequently from Dardilly to attend the services of the church, and who was noticeable for his piety and devotion. On the other hand, the sensitively-religious soul of the boy was drawn to the saintly priest, whose noble life was well known to him.

"Young men shall see visions and old men dream dreams," says the Holy Scripture. This old man dreamed a dream of the devout boy standing at the altar, a priest of God, spending himself and being spent in the saving of souls. It was for him, then, to do everything in his power to nurture the vocation that was so evident, and to do nothing that would frustrate God's plans for the soul that had been placed in his care. The boy saw a vision of himself becoming like the holy priest he had come to know, respect and love. From his earliest years he had seen the desolation of the land made desolate by the wicked laws that proscribed the practice of religion. He had grieved with other pious souls in their deprivations, and he had known that the only bright spots in their drab lives were the ministrations of priests like Father Balley. These noble men who gladly risked their lives in the performance of their duty were the heroes of his young life. To his innocent and pure soul they were indeed Our Lord Himself "going about doing good." Nothing could be greater, then, than to be like them. The example of Father Balley's heroic self-sacrifice crystallized the influences that had been shaping John Baptist's life, unconsciously, into a vocation to the priesthood.

There is much food for thought in the conjunction of these two lives, out of which came the priestly service of the Curé d'Ars that culminated in sainthood. What would have happened to the peasant boy of Dar-

dilly if he had not met the Curé of Écully who shaped and molded his life? God indeed calls His priests to Himself. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you," said Our Lord. Yet, human agencies are needed to develop and nourish the vocation. We very often meet men writhing in the restlessness of a lost vocation, "square pegs in round holes." Their life history would show where they had been turned aside from the path that would have led them to happiness. On the other hand, every priest can look back and see how God's Providence shaped his destiny. Trivial circumstances, scarcely noted at the time, were crucial points in his career. Happenings that loomed up as if they were barriers to his ambition, proved to have been like the hazards of the golf links that test skill and earnestness. The retrospect of his life shows the influences that developed and fostered his holy vocation, indirectly and directly. It may have been a teacher at school, whose skill in boy-psychology first awakened in him a love of learning. Or, perhaps much was owed to the vehement zeal of such a teacher as Dr. Johnson's Mr. Hunter: "Mr. Langton one day asked him how he acquired so accurate a knowledge of Latin, in which, I believe, he was exceeded by no man of his time; he said, 'My master whipt me very well. Without that, Sir, I should have done nothing.'" (Boswell's Life of Johnson.)

Whatever else memory may recall to the priest as influencing factors in his vocation, there is always the clear, defined image of some priest who, consciously or unconsciously, was his inspiration. It may also happen that the image is a composite portrait of the several priests with whom he came in contact in boyhood. The most vivid memory, too, may be of one least known. The appearance, manner or voice of a chance visitor to the parish church may stand out in memory's picture

more clearly than the priests of the parish seen daily or weekly, and known intimately. However variously the subconsciousness of the boy may have been affected, and however casual and unnoted at the time were the elements that went to make up the composite, nevertheless every priest finds himself harking back in his own priestly life to those influences of his childhood, and realizes how vital they were in shaping his future life.

Out of the past comes the vision of a carefully-groomed, darkly-clad figure, whose air made him marked amongst other men in the streets. The boy could not know, of course, what made the difference, but he was affected by it, and in later years he came to know how distinctive is the indelible mark of the priesthood. The doctor, lawyer, scientist and teacher may doff their profession and mingle unnoticed with other men, but the priest is never off duty, and cannot wear mufti comfortably, or with any hope of success.

In the kaleidoscopic memories of a priest's boyhood there appears clearly defined the reverent figure of the priest at the altar. All the details are perfectly plain. The smoothly-shaven face, neatly arranged hair and spotless linens; the carefully-draped vestments that gave dignity to every graceful movement of the Mass; the unhurried passings back and forth before the altar; the devout genuflexions that made the onlooker know that God was being saluted; the sound of the sonorous Latin, read or sung; the appealing prayerfulness of the uplifted hands, so scrupulously clean; the calm recollection of the whole man showing his realization of the tremendous act he was engaged in. The boy who saw, knew nothing of the charm of rubrics carefully observed, but the priest who remembers has the secret, and he understands why the boy's mind was so impressed.

If the priest had the happiness of serving at the altar

in his boyhood, then memory's pictures throng his mind. The silent figure that knelt in preparation for Mass, on the prie-dieu in the sacristy; the reverential robing for Mass; the delicate handling of the corporal, burse and chalice at the altar; the gentle, loving touching of the Host; the rapt and reverent faith shown in every action of distributing the Blessed Sacrament in Holy Communion to the people; the eloquent attitude of adoring gratitude at the thanksgiving after Mass. Every minister of God knows how such pictures swing into his mind to console or to chasten him in his priesthood.

How often it happens as he kneels at the service of the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, in the smoke of the incense he sees the picture of himself, a small boy, very proud of his office with thurible or card, warily watching the coped figure who knelt so upright, with clasped hands, and whose eyes were fixed with such intent on the White Veil that wrapped Our Lord on His golden throne amongst the lights and flowers! He remembers the thrill that went through him in the joy of being so near, as with the priest he bowed low in adoration. Perhaps then was born the desire to kneel one day in such a golden cope, and have the power to swing from the thurible the sweet incense of praise and adoration that swirled and circled about the Host, a very symbol of loving faith.

It may have been that the first impulse came from a sermon, heard in boyhood. There are priests living who remember *verbatim* words of a sermon heard many years before that opened to their young minds the new world of spirituality. A glowing phrase, a startling comparison, a striking application of the Gospel lesson acted like a spiritual electrolysis in refining all vague longings into a definite desire to serve God in the priesthood.

The realization of the importance in his own case of the incidents of childhood and boyhood, makes every priest very careful in his relations with the boys his duties make him associate with in the sacristy and in the school. He knows that every small boy is a "Brooks of Sheffield." The wide eyes of childhood miss nothing, and the active young mind is making comparisons, and drawing conclusions that are not revealed by the innocent expression of the face.

Every boy is naturally a hero-worshiper, but his ideal flits unconscionably and with little provocation. What seems a trifling thing to the adult mind is often enough to blow aside the robe of idealism, and a vision of the clay feet of his idol will destroy all influence forever.

"The king can do no wrong" means nothing to a boy's mind, for his sense of justice is very keen, and any injustice rankles always, even into manhood. In proof of this we have but to try to recall the punishments of our childhood. The memory is of the vaguest, excepting of those that we felt then were inflicted unjustly, and the memory of these is as of yesterday. A priest, therefore, is most scrupulous in his distribution of awards and punishments, and will explain the reason for his decisions, lest he unwittingly plant in youthful minds bitterness and prejudice that may endure and cause disaster. Elders do not often enough give credit to the amenableness of children to reason. The child-mind is controlled by the emotions, and through these confidence can be won or lost, and influence likewise. The trust of a child is the sweetest thing on earth. Although the child's natural reticence will never reveal the bitterness of a betrayal, it is a tragedy in his life,—and there are no tragedies like the tragedies of childhood.

The priest's knowledge of children must naturally be academic, but he will be saved much, and learn much,

by careful reading of books like Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland,* and *Through a Looking Glass,* Kenneth Graham's *Golden Age,* and John Ayscough's *Gracechurch* and *Monksbridge.* From these he will get a glimpse into the strange world children live in, its devious paths of child-thoughts, its bewildering ethics, and very real joys and sorrows. It's a world well worth studying for its own sake, even if Our Lord had not said, "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

More than in any other of his relations with the laity is the priest "another Christ" with the children of his parish. Therefore he, too "forbids them not," for he knows that "of such is the kingdom of God." To mingle with their play, to listen to the childish tales (if he be fortunate enough to have their confidence), to see the sweet innocence of their souls reflected in the eyes so unafraid and trustful, is to the priest like coming out into the sunshine after breathing the fetid air of a sickroom.

There is no sweeter scene in all the Gospel than that in which St. Mark describes (x. 13-15) the day in the springtime when Our Lord took the little children in His arms, "embracing them and laying His hands upon them." He let them cluster about Him, smoothed their soft faces and watched the play of light in their eyes as He spoke so softly to them, while He and they enjoyed together their triumph over the grumpy Apostles who would have sent them away. No wonder "He was much displeased" with those who would have deprived Him of that human joy! He had seen so much misery and suffering, so much selfishness, so much sin and its effects all about Him; it was a blessed relief to bathe His soul in the sweet innocence of childhood. So every priest feels at times, when the grime of the world's evils is settling on him and his soul is sick with the sordid,

seamy life he must live in. Then he realizes the truth of Luke Delmege's words: "There is nothing sincere or open in the world but the faces of little children. God bless them! They are a direct revelation from heaven."

Because the priest has the same point of view as his Master, he knows how sacredly precious is the innocence of children. Therefore with every care he guards the fragile treasure of those souls fresh from the hands of God. He burns with righteous anger against anything that would soil such lovely temples of the Holy Ghost. God's flowers they are, and the heats of life's Summer will wilt them, but woe to the desecrating hand that would sully their Springtime beauty! Ever before the priest's eyes is Our Lord's awful alternative of the millstone-loaded wretch squirming in the depths of the sea.

The priest must be interested in the children God has placed in his care, not only for the human comfort they are to him, but because in his influence on them by word and example he is shaping the generations that will have to be the bulwark of the Church. They are the parents of the future, but, especially, among them are the future priests, and Brothers and Sisters, on whom will depend the handing on of Christ's teachings. Therefore there can be no sparing of himself. His time, care and solicitude must be for these lambs of his flock. It is his duty to see that when he has done his work, other priests must stand in his place to offer up the Holy Sacrifice and to minister to the faithful. He must reproduce himself spiritually. His vows have shut him out from the vision that comes to all men, of the years when age will creep over them and they will gladly lay down the burden of life knowing their flesh and blood still walk the earth, carrying on their work, taking their part in the business of life.

A higher and nobler vision is his. To see robed at God's altar, priests of God, the boys he knew and influenced! Perhaps out of his meager resources he may be fortunate enough to educate one or more of these. Then, happily he can feel his own strength leaving him, joyfully he can go to his reward, with the assurance that he has done his share in perpetuating Christ's priesthood.

In his old age, bent under the burdens and burnt by the heats of long faithful years, he can rejoice at the strong young workers who have come into the vineyard through his influence and example. He sees, in the retrospect of the years, the boy whose soul was wakened by his careful attention to his priestly duties. He sees him develop into the youth to whom he spoke of the grandeur of a life of service for God, whom he encouraged in his studies and skilfully turned away from the world's allurements. He sees him, the young seminarian, giving edification during the vacations, the envy of his less fortunate schoolmates. With misty eyes he sees again the day when that boy, now a man, prostrate before his Bishop, his freshly-anointed hands folded in the promise of obedience, was given the mighty power of the priesthood, "to offer sacrifice for the living and the dead," and to whom were whispered the words that sound through the ages from the Upper Chamber, "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven." His hands trembled that day, raised above the bowed head, but it was with gratitude and love.

As if it were but yesterday, he sees the white-robed figure of the young priest offering his first Mass. How proudly he looked on him that day, standing in his place at the altar. From time to time the young priest has come to consult him in the difficulties of his position. No earthly father could with more love and devotion, counsel and advise. Reports come to him of his

protégé's zeal and care in his duties. He sees himself living again his early days in the priesthood, as he listens. There is no more for him to do. He can clasp his wrinkled hands, worn in God's service, and with smiling lips sing, "Now Thou canst dismiss Thy servant in peace, for his eyes have seen the salvation of Israel." Yes, he can go to his reward. When he stands before the Great High-Priest he can look trustfully for the smile of welcome that waits the good and faithful servant who has done well.

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CHAPTER III

PREPARES FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

IN 1805 Abbé Charles Balley opened a school in his rectory at Écully where aspirants for the priesthood might study the classics in preparation for their entrance into the Seminary. St. John Baptist Vianney became one of the limited number, making his residence with his mother's relatives in Écully. Instead of the preliminary instruction that his companions had enjoyed, John Baptist's equipment in the elementary branches of education had been very inadequate. A smattering of arithmetic, history and geography learned in a desultory attendance for a couple of years at the school of M. Dumas, in Dardilly, supplemented by the few months' instruction for his First Holy Communion, comprised the whole book of education of this youth, who was then nearly nineteen years old.

He was, however, gifted with a high degree of natural intelligence, and his pure soul, near to God, was very susceptible to the lessons of nature that were all around him in his life on his father's farm. In his sermons in later days the practical application of the Gospel lessons to the times, and the picturesque images he employed, show how keen was his perception, and how clear was his mind in those days.

The superiority of the country-bred boy over his city-bred fellow has been proved so frequently by the innumerable instances of the success of the former in the competition of life in every grade, as to have become a commonplace. The reason is perfectly obvious. The

city boy's mind is burdened, at an early age, with a multiplicity of useless knowledge and experiences which the country boy is spared. The result is that when manhood is reached, the one brings a jaded, blasé spirit to compete in life's problems, while the other takes up the gage with a fresh unsullied strength that secures him success.

Young Vianney was older than his classmates by many years, and, embarrassed by this as well as by the novelty of his situation, found great difficulty in adjusting himself to the routine of studies. The study of Latin was for him especially difficult. In spite of the aid he received from his classmate, Matthias Loras, who was afterwards the first Bishop of Dubuque, Iowa, he was greatly depressed because, as he said in after years, "he learned very slowly and his memory was unretentive." He would have been spared much suffering had there been someone at hand to explain to him that the memory is a mechanical faculty, capable of training, like a muscle, and that to learn slowly and with difficulty is a guarantee of learning well. Cardinal Newman said of himself: "All knowledge made a bloody entrance into my mind." Vianney learned slowly because his mind was absorbing knowledge that would have been only superficially acquired by a less mature mind.

We all know from our own experience how little, if anything, we have retained from our early school days. (The alphabet and multiplication table are the results of mechanical memory.) It is the knowledge of our mature later days that has remained and that we profit by. Modern methods of pedagogy have been proved a failure in their indiscriminate education of the masses, by stuffing all kinds of 'ologies into children's heads. The walks of every profession are cluttered with the débris of youthful prodigies. Each of us has seen the abject failure in after-life of those who sparkled

and shone with splendor in school, for Josh Billings said truly: "Early genius is like early cabbage—it don't head well." On the other hand, of innumerable instances we see the abiding value of later education in three of our Presidents: Buchanan, Garfield and Lincoln. Each of these was prevented by adverse circumstances from receiving an education in boyhood. Each of them retrieved this handicap so effectively by study in later life as to secure the position most coveted in our country.

Our Saint, however, knowing nothing of all this, and thinking himself an isolated case, was very much discouraged and gave himself to renewed prayer and the heroic practice of self-denial. He thought even of abandoning his studies for the priesthood, but fortunately was dissuaded by the Abbé Balley. Although intensely religious, he was not a prig. On the contrary, he was of a gay and cheerful disposition, and possessed a keen sense of humor. "His gaiety was so frank that every eye brightened at his coming," says his biographer, Mons. Joseph Vianney.

It was during these days of trial that he received the sacrament of Confirmation from Cardinal Fesch, the Archbishop of Lyons and uncle of Napoleon. He also made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Francis Regis at Louvesc. On his return to Écully he found a new facility in his studies, and was most grateful to the Saint, to whom he always afterwards exhibited a great devotion, having his picture in the rectory of Ars and his statue in the church.

For four years our Saint applied himself diligently to his studies. In 1809, however, Napoleon was so pressed for soldiers in his war with Spain, that he withdrew the exemption he had granted to Cardinal Fesch for all ecclesiastical students in the Diocese of Lyons. St. John Baptist accordingly received orders

to join the troops. A series of extraordinary circumstances, however, brought him instead to the little village of Noes. Here, by the direction of the mayor, he changed his name to Jerome Vincent, and lived hidden for three years, his whereabouts unknown even to his own family. We may know how unfounded is the story of his illiteracy, and, incidentally, how well he had profited by the four years in school at Écully, from the fact that he spent the three years of his stay in Noes teaching in the village school. So well did he succeed in his new position that after the secular studies were over for the day, the children would return to the schoolhouse for religious instruction. He spent the evenings in visiting the homes of his pupils, and to them and the assembled elders of the village he explained the Gospel and told stories from the lives of the Saints. The best method of learning anything is to teach it to others. These familiar discourses with the simple people of Noes gave our Saint a store of experience and practice that served him in good stead in after years for the charming homilies he delivered daily at Ars.

In 1812 our Saint's younger brother went into the army as his substitute, and he himself entered the Petit Séminaire at Verrières, to begin the study of philosophy. He was then twenty-six years old, and his lot was not a happy one with the two hundred boys, all much younger than himself, who were his fellow-students. In later years the Saint admitted that he had "suffered somewhat" while at Verrières. Anyone who knows boy-nature can realize how mild a term this is, to describe the possibilities for sport these two hundred youths must have found in their twenty-six-year-old confrère. It required all his fund of real humility to bear with their exuberance of spirits, which must have been very trying to him.

In this connection we think naturally of St. Thomas Aquinas, who also was made the butt of his classmates, and was called by them the "dumb ox." Vianney's professor could have paraphrased the reproof of Albertus Magnus, the teacher of St. Thomas: "You call him the 'dumb ox,' but his lowings will be heard throughout the world." As a matter of fact, St. John Baptist was superior in many ways to the boys who made game of him. His natural humility made him, however, very diffident of his abilities, and caused him to think himself inferior to those others, whose only merit was the glibness of speech and nimble wit of healthy boyhood.

Because of his difficulty with Latin, which had not been lessened by his three years at Noes, he studied philosophy in French. This was, however, no serious reflection on his ability, as six others in the College also received their instruction in this language instead of in the traditional Latin.

The Abbé Alfred Monnin, who lived with the Saint for several years as assistant priest of Ars, comments thus on the popular tale that St. John Baptist was a kind of high-grade moron, and that his admission to the priesthood was due to a miraculous intervention of Divine Providence: "The inferiority of M. Vianney's abilities has perhaps been exaggerated. It is certain that in him grace supplied for nature, by imparting intellectual virtues and infused qualities which no one who has seen him engaged in the difficult work of his apostolate can ignore; but it seems to us that it has been too often related that the Curé d'Ars was a man of hardly any parts at all. What has fostered this prejudice more than all, is without doubt, his own way of talking of himself at every opportunity. One day when we ourself wanted to verify the exact number of years he spent at Écully under the tutelage of M.

Balley, he protested against the word 'studies' which we had used: 'I never made any studies,' said he; 'M. Balley did try for five or six years to teach me something; his efforts were thrown away, for he never could get anything into my poor head.' "

We can easily imagine the whimsical smile that accompanied these words, for the Saint loved a joke and, as we shall see later, he greatly enjoyed bantering the priests and devotees who flocked about him at Ars. We have, fortunately, the testimony of M. l'Abbé Tournier, Curé of Grand-Corent,—one of his fellow-students at Verrières,—as to his standing and reputation in the Petit Séminaire: "I do not recollect that M. Vianney made any great impression one way or the other—by extraordinary capacity or incapacity. In the scholastic year 1812-13 he was in philosophy at Verrières, as I was myself; there were two hundred of us. M. Vianney not being in my section, I cannot speak positively. I believe, however, that he was weak in the subject; but numbers of others were no stronger. To assert that M. Vianney was nothing but an ignoramus is a gross misstatement. I am persuaded that M. Vianney was one of those men who, though they may not shine outwardly, nevertheless possess a sound and stable judgment, which is of more value than that superficial genius which fascinates by the aid of a prodigious memory and great facility of speech, but has nothing more solid. This last produces flowers in plenty; the former brings forth more fruit, without so many flowers."

After all, proficiency in Seminary studies, or the lack of it, is of secondary importance in the training of a candidate for the priesthood. When we consider the practical results of a priest's life in the ministry, we must admit that very little of his success depends on the book-knowledge acquired in the Seminary. The years

spent in preparation for the priesthood are so few that it is possible for the candidate to receive only the most necessary instruction in the branches of knowledge that must make up the equipment of one who is to take his place as a teacher in Israel.

Any workman, to secure results, must first learn what tools are needed in his trade, then their uses, and finally how to handle them to secure results. The man who aims to become a physician must first spend some time in preparatory study of chemistry and biology and comparative anatomy before he goes on to learn the nature and action of the drugs he will use in materia medica. Finally by textbook, lectures, dissection and clinics, he learns the structure of the human body, and the nature, cause and effects of the various diseases that attack it. The aspirant in law must first be prepared by a liberal education in literature, history and the classics. A course of special study informs his mind in the principles of analysis and synthesis that enable him to make specific applications of the general laws. Thus equipped, he learns the traditional court forms, the structure of legal documents, Federal and State laws, and the rulings of courts on these, that have made precedents for procedure in future litigation.

Ordinary application and talents will enable any normal man to pass the examinations in either law or medicine, and secure him license to practise his profession. The lawyer or doctor, however, who would depend on his College course for his success in after years, would be lamentably disappointed. He knows there are many other qualities that are necessary. Amiability of disposition, self-confidence, coolheadedness in emergencies are all essential. In like fashion, success in the law depends on the faculty of clear expression, belief in oneself, and the power to convince reluctant neutrals, or adversaries. All these qualities

added to a complete college course would not, however, suffice either lawyer or physician for success. He must know and observe the amenities and ethics of his profession. He must add constantly to his store of knowledge of it by continual study of new conditions, decisions and discoveries, as well as by the general reading that keeps him in touch with men and happenings in the world.

All this applies with equal truth to the natural side of a Seminarian's training for the priesthood. As a supplement to his preliminary school course, he must acquire, either in a college or in the Preparatory Seminary, an ordinary classical education. This comprises a knowledge of Latin and Greek, for these he must use in his higher studies. In school he has already learned the general rules for the use of the vernacular. His studies along this line will be in the nature of a critical knowledge of the language and its literature, with practice in composition and clear expression. This is most important, as English will be the constant instrument in his priestly life for instruction and preaching. Its correct use will be his credential as a member of a learned profession. His preparatory studies will include also a knowledge of some of the modern languages, and the rudiments, at least, of the sciences. Thus equipped the student passes on to the study of philosophy, and the studies correlative to this important branch of knowledge.

In these days of loose thinking, and more loose expression of thought, the priest stands out most notably in the clearness of his reasoning, his powers of analysis and his application of Catholic principles to the problems of life expressed in terms that cannot be misunderstood. In any circumstance where a parallel can be made, this qualification of the average priest is most apparent. His years spent in the study of philosophy

have trained his mind in perception, reasoning, correlation and application, and have given him a mastery over all others less fortunate in their training.

Having been trained not only in philosophy but in the use of Latin as a vehicle of expressing thought, the Seminarian is ready for his four-years' study of Theology and the Holy Scripture. The law-student learns the laws of his country, together with their history and application, from the Digests of admitted authorities. In like manner the Seminarian studies the Laws of God and of the Church embodied in the Fathers, the Decrees of the Councils and the Roman Curia, from the learned works of approved authors. The student of medicine learns pathology and the remedies for diseases of the body. The Seminarian studies the diseases of the soul in his Moral Theology, and makes himself master of the Church's means for their treatment and cure.

When, however, the years of Seminary life are ended, the examinations passed, and the eve of his ordination arrives, the young levite realizes how incomplete is his equipment for the tremendous work that lies before him in his exalted profession. He has but dabbled in shallow pools along the shore of the ocean of knowledge. He has learned, indeed, how much there is to learn. He has learned where he can obtain that knowledge. He looks forward eagerly, therefore, into the long years ahead, knowing the joy it will be to study and learn more and more, not only for the pleasure of knowing, which is the highest form of pleasure, but that he may impart what he knows to the souls entrusted to his care, and thus fulfil the destiny of his life. If he were foolish enough to wrap his talent in the napkin of self-satisfaction, and bury it in indolence of life, he knows he would be derelict to his vocation,

and would merit the condemnation of his Gospel prototype.

The young priest is saved from this, because he knows his profession is supernatural as well as natural. His seminary career has not only equipped him for the exercise of his natural talents and given him the instruction for carrying on his work in the Church in a material way. It has done much more than this for him.

The most brilliant student would be only an abject failure in his priestly career if his success in class were his only equipment. Sometimes it has happened that, through lack of appreciating the importance of the spiritual side of his training, disaster has overtaken one who gave high promise of success. Whether this sad condition was due to his own uncorrected heedlessness, or to the "taking for granted" attitude of his superiors, the result was the same. It may be that the boy whose name was called for highest award at the Concursus, and who tripped blushingly down to receive his medals from the Ordinary, amidst the applause of his fellow-students and the smiling approval of his professors' whispers: *"Palmam qui meruit ferat,"* is lost sight of entirely after ordination, and the career that seemed so promising is nipped in the bud.

On the other hand, perhaps the boy who hovered precariously between *proxime accessit* and *laudatus verbis amplissimis,* or who may have even at times slipped into the *laudati* class, begins soon after Ordination to be spoken of as a priest who is doing things for God and the Church. He becomes known as an earnest preacher, a successful organizer, and one who is always to be relied on for faithful attention to parish work. It is only a matter of years until a position of trust will be his natural reward for these qualities. The failure of the one and the success of the other have

arisen from the appreciation, or the lack of appreciation, of the spiritual side of Seminary life. It is this that makes or mars the career of a priest.

"Every man is a poet when he reads a great poem with comprehension and appreciation," said Thomas Carlyle. The Seminarian who reads the great poem of the priesthood with comprehension and appreciation, is a priest in spirit in all the years of his preparation for his holy office. It is for this reason that the authorities of the Seminary arrange the curriculum of studies, as well as the rules of the house, with the end of the priesthood always in view. The devout and learned professor of each branch keeps before the minds of his pupils the usefulness of that particular branch as a preparation for the active ministry for Christ that will be theirs some day. He explains how literature, chemistry, mathematics and the rest, will each play its part in the making of a priest, as much as the higher studies. At Annapolis and West Point the cadet is never allowed to lose sight of his career as an officer in either of the two great arms in our country's defense and protection. So the ecclesiastical student is constantly reminded on all sides of the career that awaits him as an officer in Christ's army.

The very atmosphere of the Seminary compels the student to breathe in and become saturated with the ideal of priestly perfection. The minutest rule that governs the hours of daily life, from rising to retiring, has its important place in his training. He is made to understand that its observance is not so much a matter of doing this or that, or being here or there at a particular time, but that it is based on the words of the *Imitation:* "No man can command who has not learned first how to obey." The strict observance "to the fingernail" of the rubrics in the public services of the Church that are held in the Seminary chapel, is

an object lesson to him, and becomes unconsciously a rule of life in after years. "We did it this way in my day in the Seminary" is the proud explanation of many an old priest for his meticulous care of the Church's regulations.

No matter how long the shadows may be that the years cast on the priest's life, the soft evening air of May brings back to him the sweet memory of those evenings in the Seminary in that month when he gathered in the chapel for the devotions to the Mother of God. The very words of the spiritual reading come back to him. The smell of the incense, the brightening of the altar candles as darkness began to settle down, the strong young voices intoning the Benediction hymn, and the Host raised in the Monstrance for the good-night blessing that closed the day's labors with a golden clasp—all this brings tears to his eyes, but joy to his heart, as he counts the years on the rosary of his life in which he has lived over those scenes in his parish devotions to the Blessed Virgin.

The man or woman gifted with the talent for music, painting or sculpture knows the need of living in a congenial atmosphere, that the gift may develop in favorable circumstances. In Rome, Paris, Florence or Berlin the young artist finds the atmosphere in which to grow and expand, learn and unlearn. So, in the Seminary the young man called by God to serve the altar finds everything working sympathetically to make grow and burgeon the seed that has been planted in his soul.

The rules that divide the Seminarian's day into periods of prayer, study, rest and recreation, and that regulate his conduct during these periods, have been drawn up by wise experienced men, and have the sanction of the centuries. In their observance are formed the habits that make the priest's armor of defense and protection when he must exchange the peaceful haven

of the Seminary for the turmoil and bustle of the world in which he is to do God's work. As Nature wraps the tree about with layer on layer of protective bark in the successive years of its growth, so that it may successfully withstand the strength of the storm, so the soul of the Seminarian is armored in the years of his training by his religious observance of the rules of the House, his diligence in his studies, and careful practice in the exercises of piety. Storms may sweep off the leaves of the tree, and even break its branches, but the trunk stands firm and unyielding, and with power to put forth new shoots, if necessary, to replace the damage done.

It has been said by the highest authority that the ability to live out the routine of a Seminary course is the surest test of a divine vocation. The boy who comes from a home where he has been carefully sheltered and coddled, where his wants were anticipated and his wishes fulfilled, naturally finds it difficult at first to accommodate himself to the Procrustean bed of the Seminary's rigid rules. The novelty of his situation, however, soon serves to soften the harshness of the grooves. The discipline that arranges his time and acts, leaves him little opportunity for repining. The healthy friction of contact with other boys, who have an uncanny gift of perceiving his weaknesses, and who are very frank in their efforts to improve him, soon smooths him into his place in the student body. He comes to know that study, class and play are acts as religious as the actual time spent in prayer. Night finds him healthfully wearied, and the morning Mass sprinkles him with benedictions for the day's duties. The new worlds his studies open to him, and the fascination of gaining knowledge of them, speed the years, and it is almost with surprise that he finds himself at the end of those happy days.

It would be an ideal condition to have the routine of the Seminary unbroken by the vacations that interrupt the student's life of study and prayer. The holiday leisure often palls on the boy away from the Seminary, and he frequently finds himself homesick for its atmosphere and companionship. Moreover, the adulation of family and friends, and the novelty of the distinction accorded him at home as a Seminarian, may sometimes give him a false idea of his importance. Some authorities have solved the question by vacation camps, with light studies, where the Seminarians have recreation without being exposed to the dangers of the world. Others, however, consider the vacation as a test of vocation, as well as a rest from the routine of the Seminary. There may be much truth in this view. The officials of our Army, however, did not think it prudent to expose the soldiers to the fumes of poison-gas before they had become experts in the use of protective masks.

A priest must inevitably face the dangers of the world at closest contact, but he has the sacramental grace of Holy Orders. This is augmented daily by Holy Mass, the Divine Office and the innumerable special graces secured to him in the practice of his sacred duties. There is therefore no parity between him and the Seminarian, who is naturally a choice quarry for the devil, who goes about seeking whom he may devour. Sometimes, alas! his roarings may sound to innocent and inexperienced ears like the sweet calls of friendship, or the purrings of disinterested solicitude. The Seminarian, however, who has truly the spirit of his vocation avails himself earnestly of all the supernatural aids which his life in the Seminary holds out to him each day. When therefore he leaves the Seminary for the vacation that is to give him renewed strength of body, he is like the travelers described by Horace:

"Coelum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt" (Epist. I, xi, 27). Wherever he may go, and with whomsoever he associates, he deports himself in a manner consistent with one who will one day stand at the altar of God as the representative of Our Lord. He renews his spirit each day by the Mass, Holy Communion, the Rosary and other devotions that, like heavenly unguents, soothe and strengthen his soul.

In such manner St. John Baptist Vianney passed the days of his Seminary life and its holidays, during the two years that he was a student at Verrières. In 1814 he was admitted to the Grand Séminaire of St. Irenaeus, in the Square Croix Paquet, at Lyons. Here he continued the exercises of piety and edification that had distinguished him in the Petit Séminaire. Abbé Monnin gives the following account of the Saint's life in the Grand Séminaire, gathered from the testimony of his fellow-students:

"In the world, he had lived the life of a seminarian; here, he lived like the denizen of another world. His one preoccupation was to make his life approach more nearly to his ideals of a vocation; and to concentrate his energies—of which contact with the world had been powerless to tarnish the purity or soften the temper—on the service of God and the perfection of his own soul. His humility, gentleness and piety seemed to increase. While they could scarcely be concealed from the observation of those around him, the acts of interior mortification and renunciation, by which he strove to build up the new man on the ruins of the old one, were known only to God. From this time he appears to have acquired such a perfect self-mastery as to be impervious to lesser things; and could devote himself to the performance of the most perfect thing in the most perfect manner. He was never known to infringe a rule in the most minute particular; none ever

surprised him in conversation during silence time; nobody ever found him distant or uncivil at recreation. Nor did he manifest choice or preference in his companionship; he accepted the first that came, and tried to make himself all things to all men that he might gain all to Jesus Christ. In his case a universal benevolence did not signify a regard so generally distributed as to amount to nothing in particular; but consisted in real sympathy for each and every one with whom he was associated, without exclusion or selection; and all who approached him invariably found him interested in themselves and their concerns. He never sought mere amusement from his intercourse with others; and even respect induced, or friendship attracted, flattering as they might seem, were only valued by him insofar as they influenced the individual concerned for good. Although his disposition and tastes leaned naturally to those matters in which piety was concerned, he never tried to lead up to them, so as to be able to converse more easily, exhibit his knowledge of spiritual things, or appear virtuous. He lent himself readily to every sort of conversation, adapting himself to every variation of mood or variety of character, without either constraint or ostentation, but always keeping himself as much as possible out of sight."

CHAPTER IV

HIS ORDINATION

THERE was at that time a great necessity for priests in France, to make up the losses suffered by the Church through the Revolution and the Napoleonic troubles. The authorities of the Seminaries, therefore, hastened as much as they could the time of ordination for the ecclesiastical students. In spite of the pressing need, however, they were diffident about proposing John Baptist for Sacred Orders, as he had studied but a few months' theology. He was, nevertheless, "the model of the whole Seminary in piety and devotion," they declared to the Vicar-General of the Diocese, Msgr. Courbon. He thereupon examined the candidate himself. "You know as much as many other Curés" was the decision of this wise Churchman, and our Saint was ordained Subdeacon, July 2, 1814.

Those were parlous days for France. Twenty years of wars had bled her white, and the end was not yet. Even the most docile nation will turn against its greatest hero when it finds itself made into fagots for the fires of his ambition. *"Qui mange au Pape en crève"* (Who eats of the Pope dies of the Pope), says the old French proverb. Napoleon had indeed eaten of the Pope. Pius VII had been dragged, a prisoner, from Rome to Savona, July 5, 1809, and that was the beginning of the end for the Emperor.

"Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad." Like a swaggering bully drunk with power, the Corsican, who dreamed himself another Charlemagne, had

played skittles with the kingdoms of Europe. His upstarts sat uncomfortably on the hereditary thrones of centuries. The splendors of his military successes had dazzled his deluded soldiers to their death, and hypnotized statesmen and churchmen to become his tools. But there was one he could neither browbeat, deceive nor cajole. The Vicar of Christ, humiliated, insulted and a prisoner, would not grant Napoleon's demands for a divorce for himself, or declare his brother Jerome's marriage invalid, or help him politically. The world was astounded, and Napoleon enraged. "Alexander the Great declared himself the son of Jupiter, and in my time I find a priest who is more powerful than I," cried the Emperor. "What a power is religion, that gives strength to the weak when all that was strong has lost its strength!" wrote the Protestant Madame de Stael.

When Pius VII, worn out by Napoleon's duplicity and overbearing tyranny, was at last obliged to excommunicate him, he had sneered: "Does the Pope think the muskets will drop from the arms of my soldiers?" But it was that exactly that happened! As the wearied and starved soldiers of France fled from the flames of Moscow, where they had hoped to find food and shelter, the muskets dropped from their frozen arms. The Russian campaign was the death-knell of the Empire. Too late the Pope was set at liberty, after five years of imprisonment. Too late Napoleon tried to make friends with him whom he had treated so grievously. Bernadotte, his own creature, Murat his friend, turned their armies on the tottering idol. Cities capitulated to the Allies, who dictated their own terms. On March 31, 1814, the Allies entered Paris; April 3 the Senate declared Napoleon dethroned; May 4 Napoleon was in Elba and Louis XVIII reigned King of France! For ten months the fallen Emperor ate out his heart in his

toy court, looking longingly towards France. Then came the one-hundred days—a mirage of his fallen greatness—and then Waterloo!

In the midst of these excitements, that penetrated even into the Seminaries, St. John Baptist pursued his studies. On the fateful June 18, 1815, that crushed Napoleon's hopes irretrievably, our Saint was making his retreat for Deaconship. Five days afterwards he received this sacred Order from Msgr. Simon, the Bishop of Grenoble. On August 13, the thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost, he was ordained a priest by the same prelate, in the Cathedral of Grenoble.

The summer sun that brightened the beginning of our Saint's priestly life that morning, looked down also on the ending of Napoleon's career, as the English warship *Northumberland* carried him to St. Helena, a prisoner of the Allies. With folded arms, the dethroned Emperor looked over the waters down the vista of the past. Twenty years of ambition had woven for him a crown and scepter out of the ruins of Europe's peace and happiness. Crimson-stained years, that glistened with the tears of countless widows and orphans. Years of self-deification and disdainful defiance of laws human and divine! What a vision to haunt his dreams in the exile of his island prison!

Deserted and betrayed by his friends, abandoned by the woman he had bartered his soul to crown as his empress, no wonder his thoughts turned to Josephine, whom he had treated so cruelly! No wonder his soul turned to the God he had scorned, and Who once more had "put down the mighty from their seat"! "It would rest my soul to hear Mass," said Napoleon to his jailer, Sir Hudson Lowe. "I was born in the Catholic religion. I wish to fulfil the duties it imposes, and receive the succor it administers," were his words of greeting to the Abbé Vignali, appointed his chaplain by

England, through the intercession of Pius VII. For six years the soul of the fallen Emperor walked the gloomy corridors of memory in company with the specters of the past. In 1821 death showed him the emptiness of all life that is not filled with love of God and neighbor.

That lesson had been learned long before by the white-robed figure that knelt before the altar of Grenoble Cathedral to receive the tremendous power of the priesthood. "If I were a priest what a multitude of souls I would gain for the good God!" St. John Baptist used to say longingly when a boy. Not even his most glorious dreams of service for God could visualize the reality which the future held for him. Forty-three years of priestly labors stretched before him. Years resplendent with the jewels of souls saved to God. Years golden with countless acts of charity, and perfumed with the gratitude of repentant sinners. Years of prayer and penance that wove for him the halo of sanctity, and won for him the veneration of the faithful for all ages. Years that death would crown with the reward Heaven holds for the faithful priest whose life is spent in love of God and neighbor.

Somewhere, near or far, death waits with such a crown for every priest, in the vista of the years that stretch before him on his ordination day. Each priest that day receives the same gifts and the same grace that made St. John Baptist Vianney a saint. Long years before his ordination every priest, like Samuel, has answered to God's call: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Over all the noise of the world about him has come the sweet voice of Our Lord, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me." "And everyone that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive

a hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting" (Matthew x, 37; xix, 29).

In obedience to that divine message the young neophite leaves his home and abandons his companions in the world who are intent on earthly careers of honor, fame and wealth. He forsakes all ambition which his natural talents justify, and enters the Seminary to devote himself to the service of God for the good of souls. Like an athlete preparing for the contest, the young man gives himself to the long years of training, physically and mentally, that are to fit him for the high office to which God has called him.

When we read of the rigid rules enforced by the trainer on his team, for many weeks before the football season, we need not marvel at the discipline that prepares a priest for his life-work. The abstemiousness of the training-table, the early bedtime hour, the rising betimes, the constant severe exercises and practice—all are necessary (both trainer and team know well) not only for good physical condition but to secure the clear minds, heroic temperament and absolute obedience that are even more valuable for victory. If men suffer thus for a corruptible crown, as St. Paul says, how much more for an incorruptible one. The body of the Seminarian must be made fit to stand the hardships of his ministry, by rest, food and recreation.

His mind must be stored with knowledge. "For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth: because he is the angel of the Lord of Hosts" (Malach. ii, 7). But above all he must be a spiritual man. Therefore, the years of self-denial, self-restraint, self-conquest, all endured in the spirit of obedience (both the Seminarian and his Superiors know well) are necessary for one who is to go into the world not only to battle for Christ, but as an officer of His army.

"Draw near to me, ye unlearned, and gather yourselves together into the house of discipline . . . submit your neck to the yoke, and let your soul receive discipline" (Ecclus. li, 31, 34). These words of Jesus the son of Sirach give the keynote to the training of a priest. If he is to be worthy of the high vocation that is his, the Seminarian knows that he must learn to imitate Him Who "went down with them, and came to Nazareth and was subject to them" (Luke ii, 51). He must follow in the footsteps of Him Who said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work" (John iv, 34). "Because I came down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi, 38). However irksome to his human nature may seem at times the discipline that is shaping his life, always he will find strength and inspiration in the figure of his Master prone among the olive trees, sweating blood at the prospect before Him, yet crying out, "Not My will, but Thine be done."

It is but natural that there will come to the Seminarian at times, as came to St. John Baptist Vianney at Verrières, great depression of mind and discouragement of spirit. This condition may be due in great part to physical causes, and may also be a temptation of the evil one. At any rate he should not be disturbed, but, having availed himself of natural remedies, he should betake himself earnestly to prayer, for strength and courage to persevere. The words of Moses to the sons of Levi apply to him and bring him hope and comfort: "Is it a small thing unto you that the God of Israel hath spared you from all the people, and joined you to Himself, that you should serve Him in the service of the tabernacle, and should stand before the congregation of the people and should minister to Him" (Num. xvi, 9)?

The mountain-climber finds renewed strength for his body, wearied by the rugged way, in sight of the glow-

ing summit that invites him. No matter how many may be the trials of the ecclesiastical student, or how severe they may be (and they can be many, and very severe) always there is before him the shining vision of his ordination to comfort, to strengthen and cheer him. That event is the Great Divide of his life. On the one side lie the years of childhood, covered with the merciful mists of forgetfulness; the years of boyhood, its joys and sorrows, hopes and dreams, like a distant landscape uncertainly defined; the years of youth, so sure of itself, full of brave plans and terribly earnest resolves (all so real then, so pathetically comic in the western light of life); the years of young manhood, that stand out like foothills. And then,—the mountain-top! On the other side, the glorious years of the priesthood, be they few or many.

Hilaire Belloc, in his book *The Contrast,* describes the journey over our country from East to West. As the traveler approaches the Rockies "for days the bare lift and fall continues. The vast plateaux of this mountain belt, immensely wide, are most arid,—brackish water and alkaline or sour dust. So he goes on, in this sterility of desert hills and cliffs, and muddy melting snows. Then, in one miraculous moment, he and his world are changed. He reaches the sharpest borderline, the sharpest physical frontier that is, perhaps, in this world. For he comes to the high edge of the deserts, looks down as from a table, and passes at once into what stabs him with a sudden vision of Europe glorified. It is the cascade of dense forests into the Paradise of California."

The levite travels through the years of his life to the Tabor of his ordination, where the transfigured Christ awaits him, beckoning him on. There, "in one miraculous moment, he and his world are changed." White-robed he kneels to receive "the blessing of the

Holy Ghost and the power of priestly grace." With serious dignity the mitered Bishop admonishes him "to receive the office of the priesthood worthily, and discharge its functions in praiseworthy manner." He reminds the candidate that as "the office of a priest is to offer sacrifice, to bless, to govern, to preach and to baptize, great care is taken that heavenly wisdom, upright conduct, and the long observance of justice commend those who are chosen for it." He exhorts him to bear in mind that his "doctrine is as spiritual medicine for the people of God," and that therefore "the sweet odor of his life will be the delight of the Church of Christ, for, by his preaching and example he is to build up the house, that is, the family of God."

Moved by these earnest words of his Superior, the Deacon then prostrates himself in profound humility upon the floor of the sanctuary while the Bishop intones the Litanies to beg the intercession of all the Heavenly Hosts that Almighty God will grant the spiritual and temporal favors so much needed, but especially that he who is to take on the burden of the priesthood may be blessed and sanctified and consecrated to that holy office. The solemn tones of the invoking Bishop, and the thrilling responses of the assembled clergy, in the Litanies that have come down to us through the centuries, make a new atmosphere in which no worldly thing can intrude. As if to set him apart in this new life and claim him wholly dedicate to God, the Bishop and all the priests present lay their hands on the head of him who is now to be made partner with them in God's work for man. The stole he wore as Deacon over the left shoulder, is drawn about his neck as a symbol of the sweet yoke of Christ that he must bear as His priest. The chasuble is placed about him as a sign of God's love that he is to share with mankind. Thus is he clad for the service that will be his.

So holy, however, is that service to be, and so mighty in its effects, that there must be a special blessing and anointing of the hands that will hold God in the Sacrifice, and stretch out with the power of God Himself in well-doing. "For every high-priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that he may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sins" (Heb. v, 1). With the sacred oil the Bishop anoints those chosen hands, "that whatever they shall bless may be blessed, and whatever they shall consecrate may be consecrated and sanctified, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ." Into these hands now made holy are placed the bread and the chalice, and he is given the power of Holy Orders: "Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate Mass for the living and the dead. In the name of the Lord. Amen." Pressing his hands on the bowed head the Bishop prays: "Receive the Holy Ghost: whose sins thou shalt forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins thou shalt retain, they are retained."

The most wonderful thing in the world has happened to this man. Until then his words had only the value of their own worth, his acts were as the acts of other men. Now, by his words, through the tremendous power of the priesthood that is his, the bread of ordinary life is changed into the ineffable Living Body of Our Lord, and in the chalice glistens no longer the wine and water, but the Most Precious Blood of Christ Himself. The Church has clothed him with the mantle of Our Lord. He is the ambassador of Christ. As our country is represented in distant lands by ambassadors and consuls who hold the authority of the United States, so the priest acts with the authority of God. "For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors, God as it were exhorting by us" (2 Cor. v, 20). To the contrite

sinner who kneels at his feet he represents Christ Himself.

By the Sacrament of Holy Orders the priest is lifted out of the rank and file of ordinary men and placed in the white-robed procession of priests that sweeps in dazzling array back and back through the centuries to the Upper Chamber in Jerusalem. Hand-clasped he stands with the millions of priests, white and black, brown and yellow, who in every age and clime have knelt as he knelt, and to whom was given, as to him, the awful power of the priesthood. Through the long unbroken line of Bishops has come that power from Our Lord Himself. Over the nineteen hundred years stretches that Apostolic chain that binds him to the Lord Jesus, Who, "the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye and eat; this is My body which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of Me" (1 Cor. xi, 23, 24). Each Bishop, a glorious link in the golden chain, hands on the tremendous power that Our Lord, risen from the dead, gave His Apostles: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John xx, 22, 23).

What a wonderful dignity, even from a human standpoint, is that of the priest! He is indeed "the heir of all the ages." The gifts of the poet and of the artist set a seal on them that separates them from their less fortunate fellows. The statesman glories in upholding the traditions of his country's institutions. The general of an army commands respect because of his responsible office. The priest is more than all of these. His life is a poem inspired by God. His daily Mass is the most artistic action in the world, in its age-old ceremonies and vestments. His every official act is regulated by the traditions of centuries, and his position

makes him the acknowledged leader of men. This is only the natural side of his office.

Listen to the great Lacordaire's description of the spiritual position of the priest: "To live in the world without wishing its pleasures. To be a member of every family yet belonging to none. To share all suffering, to penetrate all secrets. To heal all wounds. To go from men to God and offer Him their prayers. To return from God to men, to bring comfort, pardon and life. To have a heart of fire for charity and a heart of bronze for chastity. To teach and pardon, console and bless always."

The priest is an officer in the army of God, and his Commander-in-Chief is Our Lord. The writers on the World War made us familiar with the perfect system that connected the General Headquarters of the Allies with every section of the hundreds of miles of battle-front and rear. Telegraph and telephone, through which orders were transmitted and reports received, kept Marshal Foch in touch with the division leaders and their subordinate officers. The most distant post was thus in close and constant connection with the Commander-in-Chief. The priest keeps in touch with his Commander by prayer. His daily Mass, with its preparation and thanksgiving; the Divine Office, morning and afternoon; his Visit to the Blessed Sacrament; his daily Rosary, are his regular routine intimate reports to Headquarters. There are, moreover, emergencies that call for instant communication with his Commander. Some grievous temptation, some severe trial, some sorrow or affliction, these, and like dangers that assail him, or his flock, necessitate divine help and reinforcements that he will receive through earnest prayer.

Communications from military headquarters were always sent in code that was deciphered by the officer

who received them. In like manner the priest's Commander sends his commendations, orders, warnings and reproofs in a code to which the priest holds the key. Some humiliation comes to him, or he finds himself perhaps the object of vicious criticism, or his best endeavor is misunderstood and misinterpreted. It is a code message, and the priest knows that the key is Calvary. Easily he deciphers the message as a commendation. Perhaps great success has attended his work. His preaching has been much praised, his organizing commended. His superior has marked him out for honors among his fellow-priests. Ambition is beginning to sprout in his heart, and pride is knocking at the door. It is a message of warning, and the key is that high mountain where a dark figure crouched beside the Son of God, "and all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof" spread out below. How clear the message reads, that the enemy is closing in and that utmost vigilance is needed. "Jesus, therefore, when he knew that they would make him king, fled into the mountain, Himself alone" (John vi, 15).

The young officer who has received his insignia of rank and his commission, goes out diffident of himself but confidently and bravely determined to fulfil his duty in a most worthy manner. The young priest begins his priestly life humbly conscious of his unworthiness for the high office he has been placed in. He has, however, received his commission, and has pledged himself most solemnly to uttermost obedience as he knelt, hands clasped in the hands of his Bishop, before God's altar. He rejoices in his brightly shining armor, and in the power of his priestly sword "Excalibur." He says with St. Paul, "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me," and he goes bravely forth to give his life in God's service for the good of souls.

Thus St. John Baptist Vianney went out of Gren-

oble's Cathedral into the summer sunshine to begin his long fruitful years of priestly care of souls for God. How well he fulfilled the promise that every priest holds with him on his ordination, the Church has proclaimed by crowning him with the canonization of a saint, and by naming him the Patron of Priests.

CHAPTER V

THE SAINT AS A CURATE

ST. JOHN BAPTIST VIANNEY was twenty-nine years old when he was ordained priest at Grenoble, August 13, 1815. A few days afterwards he was appointed assistant to his old friend and patron, M. Balley, the Curé of Écully. At that time the great need for priests had hurried the ordination of our Saint before he had completed the Seminary course in Theology. To receive the faculties to hear confessions it was, therefore, necessary for him to supplement his studies by further instructions from his pastor.

This proved of great advantage to the young priest. M. Balley had known him from childhood, and had prepared him for his entrance into the Seminary. It was a labor of love, therefore, for the old priest to assume once more the position of teacher to John Baptist, whom he held in great affection and admiration. Each day several hours were spent in the study of Moral and Dogmatic Theology. The old Curé's long experience enabled him to propound practical cases in conscience to the young priest, and to expound the principles governing a decision in them.

After some months the Curé was convinced that there was no longer any reason to keep his pupil from the desire of his heart. The necessary permission having been granted by the Bishop, our Saint began hearing confessions, and his first penitent was his beloved pastor.

The people of the parish were not slow to avail themselves of the advice and counsel which the *Vicaire* dispensed in the confessional, for they had always regarded him with the highest respect. On the eves of the great festivals he passed nearly all the day, and part of the night, hearing confessions. Thus began the work that was truly his *métier,* and which for forty-three years occupied most of the hours of his days.

Never were pastor and curate united in closer intimacy than the Curé and the Vicaire of Écully. Both were actuated by the same high ideals and the same desire for priestly perfection. They read the canonical hours of the Breviary in common, and fulfilled together their other spiritual exercises. In later years St. John Baptist frequently spoke of the severe penances and rigid fasts practised by M. Balley, although he was careful to conceal his own share in these. As a matter of fact, it could be said of these two holy priests as was said of St. Benedict and St. Romanus: "They shared not so much the same feast as the same fast." They ate only one scanty meal in the day. This consisted of potatoes that were boiled in quantity once a week. When meat was provided for their table they played a game about eating it, putting this off from day to day until it became black and unpalatable. Then they ate it. They vied with each other in wearing hair shirts, chains, bracelets and other instruments of torture.

The Curé was a man of large stature and was sixty-seven years old when our Saint was appointed his assistant. He had suffered much during the Reign of Terror, and was not as physically able as St. John Baptist to withstand the strain of such mortification. After two years he was prostrated by a serious illness, resulting from his continued austerities. When about to die he requested our Saint to hide the instruments

of penance he had used, saying: "If anyone finds them when I am gone, they will think I have expiated the sins of my lifetime and will leave me in Purgatory till the end of the world."

We can readily see how these two years of his curacy at Écully, in the companionship of such a saintly priest, shaped the future life of the Curé d'Ars. Just as M. Balley had inspired him in boyhood with the desire to be a priest, so as a priest he inspired him with the desire to be a saint. The life of St. John Baptist Vianney as a curate, and his relations with the Curé of Écully, whom he was appointed to assist in the administration of that parish, are an inspiration to every priest.

When the years of preparation in the Seminary are ended, and the young priest is appointed to a place in the active life of the ministry of Christ, he steps into a condition that is entirely new to him. In his years of training he has been safeguarded and protected by the restraining rules of the Seminary and the realization that he is on probation. Absorbed in his studies, he has been kept from close contact with the world about him, and his knowledge of it is like the views of the landscape that a traveler perceives from a fast-moving train. He has been educated in the theory of the life he has vowed himself to, but his practical knowledge of it he must obtain from his own experience. Like the squires of old, he has made his long vigil with his arms and armor. At his ordination he has received the accolade of knighthood in God's service. Now he must don his armor, take his sword and go forth on his quest. His is a very serious position. It is one to test the best that is in him.

In the Seminary his day was divided into periods of study, class, recreation and prayer. Now he finds himself with much leisure. Apart from his allotted duties,

which require only a small part of the day, he is master of his time. At home, in school and in the Seminary his position was naturally a subordinate one. As a priest he is treated with consideration, his opinion on all sorts of subjects is sought and heeded, his views are regarded with respect and his favor is considered a compliment. His reaction to these new conditions affects his whole future, and therein lies the seriousness of his conduct during those first formative years in the priesthood.

In his story "The Ship that Found Herself," Rudyard Kipling describes a vessel that is making her maiden voyage from England to America. The author personifies the new and shining parts of the vessel, and makes them engage in conversation. There is much bragging and mutual criticism, in which the steam and the ocean waves take part. After some days of buffeting by the big waves of the North Atlantic, the various components settle down to work together, and a steady hum through the vessel shows that harmony has arrived, and the ship has found herself.

The young priest is a good deal like that. Fresh from his books, he has naturally a very good opinion of his ability, and a fixed idea that the Church is very much in need of him. His own opinion of himself is strengthened by the interest his youth and inexperience arouse. Youth is always attractive, and in the young priest, youth joined with the responsibility of his office makes an attractive combination. Clean babies are general favorites as objects of speculation and admiring curiosity, but only their immediate relatives are deeply interested in them, or care to accept them as an institution. Youth likewise has its drawbacks. Its enthusiasms are not always shared, and its aspirations do not always excite sympathy. The young priest is apt to have this borne in on him more or less forcibly. He

comes to see that there is a divergence between his own opinion and that of others concerning the importance of his native merits and the value of the assistance his opportune ordination is to the Church. He is, moreover, rather shocked at finding himself being taken for granted, and that the Thames is not yet a seething conflagration.

In one of his letters Dr. Samuel Johnson wrote: "I know not anything more pleasant, or more instructive, than to compare experience with expectation, or to register from time to time the difference between idea and reality." When the glamor of the first few months of his priesthood has been dimmed somewhat by the commonplace dust of daily duties, the young priest realizes the vast world of difference there is between dreams and realities. If he is the right sort (and he generally is, for the purpose of his long years of training has been to make him all that), he comes to know that:

"The Game is more than the player of the game,
And the Ship is more than the crew."

He has found himself. He settles down to the serious work that is his as a priest of God. He takes his place in the greatest organization in the world, and earnestly puts his heart into his share of God's work that the Church is doing to save the world.

The priest, however, must work it out alone with God. No one but himself and his guardian angel know the tragedy of those first years in the priesthood. He was sheltered at home, and in the Seminary, from the coarseness and corruption of the world. His study of sins in his textbooks was academic. The chronicles of crime in the newspapers were of another world, a world he knew nothing of. St. John Baptist Vianney said once to his biographer: "When I was young I knew nothing of evil; I have only learned to know it from the lips of sinners in the confessional."

What a tragedy it is when the young priest finds himself face to face with the evil of the world! In the confessional he is wrapped in the cloak of Christ's love, and though, like his Master, he may sweat blood at the Vision of Sin, he is there to heal and comfort poor penitent sinners, and pour the saving oils of the sacrament into the wounds of their souls. All that is very different from the appalling conditions into which the priest finds himself plunged, and that he is obliged by his office to oppose, and endeavor to remedy. Medical students frequently swoon away at their first experiences with the sights and smells of the dissecting-room. The priest must dissect naked souls. He is overwhelmed with the sordidness of life, the blatant ingratitudes, savage cruelties and the low cunning and scheming of men to overreach one another. He is shocked at finding what little part God plays in the affairs of men, and how small is the influence of religion in their lives.

The young priest soon comes to know the people of his parish whom he meets at the Rectory office, on sick calls, and in his work with the various parish Societies. He is horrified at the apathy with which many regard the deplorable state of the world about them. He sees them, for the most part, taking for granted, as matters of course, conditions that are hazardous to faith and morals. He finds parents who look complacently on their children cultivating dangerous friendships, and young men and women who accept as friends and companions vicious persons with whom circumstances compel them to associate. He sees the inevitable consequences of all this, in disasters that have become commonplaces. Yet those who should be warned are not warned, and those who should be guarded are not guarded, or will not allow themselves to be guarded.

Bewildered at first by all this, the young priest comes

at length to realize that every parish is a cross-section of the world. Apart from the limited number who appreciate what it is to be a Catholic, and who live their lives in grateful righteousness before God and man, the people of the parish can be sifted into several classes and grades.

There is the very large number who are exact in fulfilling their duties, who attend Mass, frequent the Sacraments, and contribute according to their means for the support of religion. They do little or nothing, however, for God and their neighbor. The needs of the Church in the West and South, and the wonderful work of the foreign missions leave them cold. They would not eat meat on Friday, but they would not sacrifice a particle of their personal comfort for the relief or instruction of their brethren. They view with unconcern the distresses of the poor and the sufferings of the unfortunate, and are perfectly satisfied with themselves. They will doubtless save their souls, but he who does that only, goes empty-handed to God.

There is another class who are content with the most meager exercises of piety and devotion. They go to Mass under the whip of obligation, and consider their attendance as a compliment to God that may be omitted for any excuse. They are like greedy children, taking everything from God without thought of the praise and glory that are His due. They look lightly on the laws of the Church, especially in regard to fasting and abstinence. They are very apologetic for the Church and its institutions, and do not hesitate to deny their religion by their conduct, if not by words, through human respect. This class is generally very sensitive, and resents reproofs and criticisms by their priests.

The young priest is very much depressed by another class that he comes in contact with in the routine work of the parish. This is made up of many grades of

careless and indifferent persons who are nominally Catholic but who are scarcely different from the pagans around them. Some are living in open violation of the Church's laws of marriage; some are giving scandal by their lives in other ways; others never go to church excepting at Missions, and afterwards relapse into their former careless manner of life.

With the knowledge of all this, he sees his work cut out for him. He knows he has been commissioned to "preach the Gospel to every creature." He therefore delivers fiery sermons breathing vengeance on all law-breakers. He seethes with indignation, and rushes impulsively after some "lost sheep" that has been getting drunk and beating its wife. But the "lost sheep" is generally a very shy animal in spirituals, in spite of its truculence in domestic affairs. It must be hunted down with great tact, and captured by strategy. There is much disappointment, therefore, and chagrin, after these fruitless assaults. Tumultuous tirades in the pulpit also do not seem to bring immediate results, excepting the dubious compliment from old ladies that "he preaches like a missionary Father." The confessionals are not besieged by weeping multitudes, and there is no need for a "standing room only" sign at the early Masses. Gloom settles down on the third story of the Rectory!

Meantime the pastor has been seeing his own youth mirrored in the enthusiasm and energy of his young confrère. He knows how keenly disappointment can cut the soul, and how early discouragement can dry up the well-springs of zeal. He knows too the havoc that the motto "What's the use?" can make. He reaches out, therefore, and lifts the crumpled young knight from the Slough of Despond into which he has been unhorsed. He reminds him of Our Lord's gentle rebuke to James and John, who would have Him command

fire to come down from heaven and destroy the city of the Samaritans that would not receive Him. He recalls the parable of the cockle and the wheat, and out of his own experience he shows the young man the marvelous ways in which God's grace operates in the souls of men.

The work of a priest (the pastor makes clear) is indeed a gigantic task, but it is not hopeless by any means. Out of apparent defeat of his efforts God brings glorious results. From the most untoward circumstances often come conversions to the true Faith. The most careless are stung into devotion by sickness or the death of some dear one. The most indifferent are brought back to God by the faithful patience of the understanding priest. Acts of kindness to the distressed, unasked charity to the poor, unselfish devotion to duty, patience with the tiresome, sympathy with the afflicted,—all these are part of the day's work to the priest, and yet, all unknown to him, they are often seeds planted and watered, that grow up to be harvested at the Parish Mission.

It's God's way that not often does the priest see or know the good results of his life and works. This saves him from the earthly reward promised the Pharisees by Our Lord. He must "go about doing good" like his Master, Who was so often weary and had not where to lay His head. Once the impulsive woman in the crowd called out her commendation. Once they said, "Never did man speak as this man," and once "they would have come by force to make Him king." But what were these to the bitter taunts and cruel criticisms: "Thou hast a devil," "Thou art a Samaritan!" "They took up stones to cast at Him," and finally—they nailed Him to a cross. Then came His triumph, and not until then.

All this the pastor explains to his young associate,

and much more concerning the mysterious working of God's grace in His Church, and how the priest, if he would be happy, must follow in the footprints of his Master, in the way that is set forth so compellingly in the New Testament.

The young priest is heartened and encouraged by the counsel and wisdom he thus receives from his older confrère. The depression and discouragement that were the efforts of the evil one to divert him from his work, are replaced in his soul by the joy that comes from doing one's duty well.

The morning Mass sets the measure of the day for him. When he clothes himself in the sacred vestments, saying the Church's prayers, and ascends the mountain of God to offer the living Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, he places himself in a supernatural atmosphere. He breathes the rarefied air of divinity. All the hours of the day he carries that atmosphere with him in all his works. To the poor and distressed who come to him in the Rectory Office, he is full of understanding sympathy. To others, such callers would be tedious, and their tales of woe tiresome, but he is their priest, and to whom else will they go for comfort and advice? The heart of the priest is glowing with the love of the Sacred Heart of Him Whom he has received in Holy Communion at the Mass, and what can he do but what his Master did Who consorted with sinners and publicans that He might win them to God?

As the day goes on there come to him the calls of the sick. No matter how inconvenient the time, or inclement the weather, or how many the calls, or how great the distance, there is no hesitation in answering. He is acting as substitute for Him Who never failed in His duty, nor shirked it. If the priest sought for human reward for his faithful service of the sick, he has it in the gladness his visit brings to the suffering. The

pain-glazed eyes that looked so longingly for his coming, brighten at his approach. Relief replaces anxiety. The soothing comfort of the sacraments brings peace to the anxious soul, and, with a sign of content, the sick one awaits in patience the outcome of God's will.

Nor is this the case only where the priest prepares a person for death. He soon comes to know the consolation of being of actual help to the sick, whose days are so long and whose nights are longer. It means only a few minutes of his time, and a few cheering words from the priest, but to one who is helpless, and whom helplessness irks, to one who has spent his days in the social companionship of fellow-workmen, and now must lie inert in pain, the priest's visit means much indeed. To very many sick, that is the only bright spot in a drab day, and a memory to live on until the next visit. So Our Lord brought sunshine into the lives of the pain-racked and afflicted in Judea and Galilee, and the priest rejoices to be able to carry on His work.

When evening is falling on the busy day of the priest, he slips into the church for his visit to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He may be wearied in body, but when he looks back over the day's activities since his Mass, his soul is content. It is a pleasant thought to know he has lived his day as his Master would have lived it had He been curate in that parish.

When the priest endeavors to live the life of Our Lord, in his work with the sick and unfortunate, he has not completed the imitation of his Divine Model to which he has vowed himself. There is another side to the priest's life, filled with possibilities for attaining priestly perfection.

Scanty as the Testament record is of Our Lord's life on earth, it contains enough for us to realize how very trying those years must have been to His human nature. This must have been especially the case in

the last three years of His life, when He had left the understanding love of His Mother and was obliged to associate with all sorts and conditions of men. He was giving men the best that was in Him. He did not spare Himself in any way. He unceasingly traveled from place to place, teaching His doctrine of love. He lost no opportunity of curing the sick and raising the dead to life. He never refused a request for His Divine assistance. He showed in every way that His life was a complete, devoted act of love for mankind.

We know how all this was received by those men and women. He was contradicted, maligned and hated by the leaders of the people who should have rejoiced to help Him. The crowd took His healings and His food, and turned away in disbelief from His teachings. Although they knew and testified that He was telling the truth, they believed His enemies and cried out their lies against Him. Outside of a few who believed and loved Him, men turned His words about, and distorted and misunderstood His acts. At Capharnaum "many of the disciples went back and walked no more with Him." No wonder He wept over Jerusalem!

All that was hard enough to bear, but, after all, these were outsiders, who did not know Him intimately. There was something more trying than all this, and that was the close association with the Apostles. Our Lord's human intelligence was, of course, the highest of all mankind, and all His habits and instincts were in keeping with His superb mind. The Apostles were ignorant fishermen, and their habits and customs must have left much to be desired. They were filled with love and admiration for Our Lord, but they did not understand Him, and their blunders, as recorded in the Gospel, would seem ludicrous if we did not know their earnestness and love. Our Divine Lord treated them with gentle, kindly forbearance, although He knew

they would desert Him in His hour of need. He gave special marks of favor to Peter, who He knew would deny Him. "He knew from the beginning who it was that would betray Him," yet He made no exception of Judas in His kindness, and appointed him the treasurer of the community purse.

The priest has no difficulty in finding a Divine precedent for overlooking and treating with gentleness the most jarring elements that come into his life. His utmost stretch of magnanimity to the uncongenial whom fortune makes his associates cannot equal that of his Divine Model. After all, the Apostles may have had bad manners, but they "spent themselves and were spent" for the spread of religion. Our Lord must have thought of their heroic future many times!

The young priest's careful study of the New Testament will show him how clearly his own life is set forth there in every detail, not only in the Gospels, where he finds the Pattern Priest, but in the Acts and Letters of the Apostles. Sometimes the pastor in his experience, may have to serve as a practical glossary, as, for instance, to make clear that the Apostles can serve as models in many other ways besides their habit of traveling about. But as he grows older the priest will come to see more and more clearly that the life of Our Lord is the matrix of the true priest. The life He led amongst men on earth, nineteen hundred years ago, impressed itself on the world like a master record, of which each priest is a reproduction, to give to men in all times and places the same Divine message in words and acts.

From his reading and meditations the priest soon learns that the priesthood is like a great hall of mirrors, each reflecting the central Figure of Our Lord. Each section may have its own peculiarities of angle and posi-

tion, but unmistakable in each is the image of the Master.

As the years of his imitation of Christ go on, the priest finds himself viewing men and things with the eyes of Our Lord. The events and incidents of his life he sees from the viewpoint of the Son of God. The result of such vision C. S. Devas has expressed in a striking passage of his book, *The Key to the World's Progress:*

"If our hearts are frozen at the sight of evil, let them be enkindled at the sight of good. And to see good we must do more than look on the surface of things, for truth is not on the surface of things but in the depths. Nay, virtue and sanctity are in great measure secret gifts known only to God and good angels. The evil of the world is not seeming in its existence but seeming in its predominance. . . . For evil is uppermost but everywhere underlined by good. We observe all startling acts of wickedness, but the daily round of ordinary goodness passes unobserved; we hear the drunken clamour of the streets, but not the silent worshippers in the watches of the night; we hear the loud iniquity of the prime of life, not the silent change in sickness and old age; we see the ill deeds all too plainly, but the excuses for ill deeds, the confusion of mind, the stress of temptation, these are mostly hidden; we see the rough exterior, the coarse violence, the brutal ungodliness of whole quarters of our great cities, not the compassion and generosity, not the courage and chivalry, not the instinct of prayer concealed all the while below the surface. Truly all men are better than they seem, and their actions often worse than their hearts. Even the squalid tenements of English cities are daily witnesses of mutual help and unfailing charity. And if in the darker places of the world we can discover so many flowers of goodness, still more in the lighter, and can count up the beautiful aggregate of the acts of human love, filial and parental, fraternal and con-

jugal, and the ever freshly springing stream of childhood and innocence. Nor are the physicians of our bodies and our goods to be heard as judges; rather as *ex parte* witnesses whose main business is with the abnormal conditions of disease and injustice. A better judgment is by the physicians of our souls who look on both sides, the good and the evil; who see how evil is made the occasion of good, as it were its counterpart and correlative; who read the unwritten record of unexhausted patience, of continuous self-sacrifice, of repentant tears; to whom ill doers are transmuted into the material for the triumph of grace, and appear the yet ungarnered harvest of the Passion and the Cross."

This is also the viewpoint of the saints, in whom was outlined so vividly the life of Our Lord. These the priest can follow in accord with St. Paul's invitation, "Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ." Yet his imitation can be varied, in keeping with the difference in circumstances. St. Paul himself demanded and received the death of a Roman citizen, by beheading, and was not crucified, like his Divine Model. In the same way the priest can follow the life of the Curé d'Ars, modified to suit his situation and environment. He and his pastor may not find it convenient, or fitting, to vie with each other in wearing hair shirts and using chains and bracelets of penance, like St. John Baptist and M. Balley, but usually local conditions will prove an effective substitute for these, and bring equally salutary results.

He can, however, imitate the charity of St. John Baptist to the poor, by generous almsgiving, and if he finds, as no doubt he will, that he is often victimized by unscrupulous persons, he knows nevertheless that he will receive the reward of his good deed. It is much better to be deceived many times than to be so shrewd that some time one worthy person would be deprived of needed assistance. Our Lord's summing up of the

judgment was not of anything but works of mercy, and it is not prudent to run the risk, through human caution, of offending Him by discriminating against one of these His least brethren who is hungry, or thirsty, or naked, or sick and in prison.

The priesthood is the Great Adventure. Everyone who has to deal with humanity knows how fascinating are its limitless phases. The priest comes constantly in closest touch with all sorts and conditions of men, and every day brings him a new variety of experiences. There is no danger of monotony in his life.

The realization of the supernatural element that is in all his works, gives a zest to the duties of a priest that no one else can appreciate. He is conscious of the thrill of influencing a congregation in preaching God's message that will touch the hearts of sinners and renew the courage of the faithful. He exults in wrestling with the devil for the prize of an immortal soul, and delights in the victory gained through the grace of the sacraments. The conviction is borne in on him constantly that he is the instrument of a special Providence in the affairs of men. He sees this forcefully evident very frequently in his visitation of the parish, and in his interviews with the chance visitors at the Parish Office. His habitual patience, gentleness, and forbearance in trying circumstances may be the means of bringing back some erring one to the Church. Or, an unobtrusive explanation to non-Catholics of something that puzzles them in our religion, may be the beginning of a conversion to the true Faith. In fact, these things happen so often in the priest's life that they become commonplaces.

All this makes up the marvel that a priest's life is to the people of the world. They wonder that young men to whom all life and its joys are beckoning, and whose talents would have won them honor and wealth

in other professions, should bind themselves to what seems an unnatural existence. They see only the outside, and know nothing of the sweet joys which the solitude of a priest's room hold for him. Domesticity has no charms for the priest who has been trained to find his world in books and prayer that teach him love of God and man. The world's pleasures are no lure to one who walks with God, and knows well what sordid depths may lie beneath a pleasing surface.

If youth and inexperience would fain try their wings about the flaming light, there are always restraining influences. Not only the tremendous folds of his daily graces that wrap him round, and that he must tear in tatters to be free, but the human aid, as well, that he receives from the society of his brother-priests holds him secure. Our Lord sent the disciples "two by two" that each might gain support from the other. The priests of the parish who work and live together may differ in age, nationality, experience and learning, but they are bound with the sacred bond of discipleship in mutual respect and assistance. The weak gains strength from the strong, and the young gains wisdom from the old. Both give and take gladly, in Him Whom they serve together.

The angels of God must watch with loving eyes the young priest as he "advances in wisdom and age and grace with God and men." Day by day they see the mountain of his merits increase by the added crimson wealth of his Masses, and the golden store of the sacraments administered. On the slopes of that mountain they see blossoming, hour by hour, the flowers of the prayers for him by grateful sinners he has saved, the poor he has aided and the innocent he has protected. Among these flowers gleam the jewels of the Divine Office, his prayers to his patron saints, and his daily Rosary and Visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

Time goes quickly with the faithful priest. Days of duty make full years of service for him as for St. John Baptist Vianney in Écully. On these he stands secure, a seasoned veteran, and he can answer a truthful affirmative to the poet's hypothesis:

"If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too:
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

* * *

"If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much:
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth, and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!"*

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CHAPTER VI

PASTOR

ST. JOHN BAPTIST VIANNEY fulfilled his duties well and faithfully as curate of Écully for two years and a half. During that time his zeal and good works for souls won him not only the affection and gratitude of the people but the respect and esteem of his ecclesiastical superiors. There was need for such a priest as he in the parish of Ars, and he was accordingly appointed pastor of that place in February, 1818. In giving him his papers the Vicar-General said: "It is a small place where there is not much love of God. You will enkindle it."

Our Saint found Ars, like many other villages in France at that time, suffering from the effects of the wounds inflicted on religion during the Napoleonic régime. Apathy had taken the place of the fervor proverbial before those evil days. Vianney's predecessor had found the uselessness of any religious service excepting daily Mass and Sunday Vespers. The week-day Mass was attended only by some old women. The few men who came to the Sunday Mass openly showed their boredom. They slept, yawned, and shifted about in their places. Some killed time by idly turning the pages of their prayerbooks during the Mass and sermon. Once the Curé asked these if they were looking for printers' mistakes in the text. On the great festivals a few women received Holy Communion but the men were ashamed even to make their Easter duty. An ingenuous person once asked our Saint if he could

receive Holy Communion in the sacristy, so that no one would see him. We can imagine the answer this request called forth.

The people of the parish were hard-working, ignorant peasants who took their work and their play very seriously. As they did no field work on Sundays and feasts, excepting during harvest time, they devoted those days to what their simple minds considered pleasure. The four taverns of the village did a thriving trade, and the square near the church, and the cabarets, were thronged with dancers and merry-makers. The chanting of the small congregation at Vespers was often drowned out by the drunken cries and oaths of the crowd outside. The pastorate of Ars was indeed a job for a saint.

This condition was abhorrent to the loving soul of the Curé of Ars, and he set himself at once to win these people back to the observance of their religious duties. They had been given into his charge by the will of God, shown in the act of his superiors placing him there. It was his duty, therefore, to do all in his power to help them save their souls. It took many long years of prayer, penance and good example before success crowned his work, but that success did come at last, and the Curé's biographer thus describes the change that came over Ars: "In all the countryside no blasphemy was heard, not a single laborer was seen at work on Sundays, even in the harvest time. Many of the women communicated every week. All the men fulfilled their Easter duties. No one was missing from the Sunday Mass. A great number was present at Vespers, which was followed by Compline and the Rosary; and in the evening when the bell, for the third time, called the villagers to church, the houses were for the third time emptied. Every evening, prayers were publicly recited before a large congregation. There

were no more drunkards lying in the ditches; and the four taverns had been closed, one after the other, for want of customers. There was no longer any immorality among the young people. There were no more dissensions between relations, nor quarrels between neighbors. The parish was a large family where all helped one another."

This sounds almost too good to be true, but we have reliable contemporary testimony attesting its truth, and, moreover, we must remember that such a Utopian condition was the natural effect of the labors of a saint. The Curé did nothing remarkable to bring about the changed conditions in his parish, but he fulfilled his priestly duties remarkably well. As the Bull of his canonization recounts, "From the beginning to the end of his forty-three years in the priesthood, the Curé d'Ars was a real pastor." The Church has named him the Patron for all priests, because he did nothing in his life that any priest may not try to imitate.

The appointment of a priest to the charge of a parish is a momentous event in his life, and is to be accepted with mingled feelings. Naturally, he is complimented at this sign of confidence from his Ordinary, but he realizes the serious responsibility that will be his as a pastor of souls. When he was a curate he was free from the cares, in spirituals and temporals, that make up the burden of the pastoral office. Then, he had fixed duties, that his appreciation of his position caused him to fulfil conscientiously. Now, he has these duties multiplied many times, and in addition he must have solicitude for the welfare of the souls entrusted to his care. Parishes differ one from another in size, location, and in peculiar local conditions, but in all that is important they have the same complexion. They are made up of the same elements, and therefore the problems of administration are similar in all parishes.

The young pastor soon realizes this, and begins to appreciate the wisdom of the Church government that arranges, wherever possible, for a priest to serve first as assistant before assuming the responsibility of a pastor. He appreciates the experience he has gained by looking on and obeying orders, and when questions arise for solution he, consciously or unconsciously, frames his decisions along the lines he has been familiar with. He is a little surprised, perhaps, to find that his point of view as a responsible party is different from that which he held as a subordinate. Parochial affairs which then seemed of small importance now assume their proper proportions.

It is a principle of physics that the higher the altitude the wider becomes the prospect of the observer. Accordingly, the young pastor has to reconstruct many of his previous impressions. Methods and decisions that seemed to his youthful vision evidences of senile eccentricity, he learns now were the result of wide and sane judgments of men and things. It may happen, however, that sometimes his decisions will be based on his previous experiences, according to the principles of photography in which a positive is made from a negative.

Whether the charge of the pastor is in a country district or in a city, whether it numbers many or few souls, the questions of organization and management are the same. All the details are relative. It is scarcely possible that a priest appointed pastor of a parish in this country, will find the conditions that confronted St. John Baptist Vianney at Ars. He will have, nevertheless, wherever he is located, sufficient objects for his priestly zeal, to occupy his entire attention and constantly alert vigilance.

In the business world, when a man finds himself in a position of importance he knows that success depends

on his utmost efforts. He allows nothing to distract him from securing the results of his energy, and gladly gives the best that is in him to his business. He rejoices in making plans and putting them in execution for the furtherance of his affairs. He endeavors to anticipate the moves of his rivals and competitors, and exults in the victory that crowns his labors. Men say of him that he has his heart in his business and therefore he is sure to succeed. If such a man were asked what success means to him, and what reward he will gain for such toiling and moiling, he would answer that success will bring him money, and opportunities for acquiring more money; that by succeeding he will win the esteem of his fellow-men; that he owes it to himself to do his best, and that his highest reward is the consciousness of having done his work as well as he could, even if he should fail in gaining all he strove for.

Among professional men we see the same serious application marking the successful lawyer and doctor. There are drones and sluggards in the professions as in business, but the activities of life soon shake them to the bottom, to lie complacently inert. The successful medical man rejoices in his practice. Each case is a new opportunity for his skill. If he is a physician, he attends scrupulously to his office hours and is regular in his visits to his patients. He knows his reputation depends on his attention to each one, and he therefore studies symptoms diligently, and carefully applies remedies. He keeps himself posted in all the latest advances in medicine, that he may not fail in his service to the sick. If he is a surgeon, he appreciates the necessity not only for thorough knowledge of anatomy but for steady nerves to direct his scalpel. Nothing that could disturb the skill of his hands, or mar the clearness of his brain, is allowed into his life. He is familiar with the last word in the appliances of his profession, and

eagerly seizes whatever will aid him with swiftness and sureness in his operations.

These men, if they were asked, would answer that the reward of all their unremitting efforts in their profession is the realization that they are of service to their fellow-men by preventing, or lessening, pain and suffering. Success means to them, not the money that they receive from their labors but the respect of their fellow-practitioners and the grateful affection of those they have helped by their skill.

The successful lawyer wins his cases by his nimble wit, cleverness in argument and eloquent pleading. His reward for the long years spent in attaining his equipment by the study of elocution and the acquisition of knowledge of all kinds, lies in the consciousness of his powers and joy in their use. The thrill of victory, and the admiration of his fellows, are secondary to the verdict of his own heart.

The position of a pastor is much more important than that of business man, doctor or lawyer, and it embraces all the qualities that mark these professions. The pastor who would be successful must emulate these men in energy, devotion to duty and wholehearted application of all his talents to his parish. He is the physician of souls, and every member of his flock is his patient. Each person has individual traits and conditions of life that need skilful special treatment. No wholesale prescriptions will bring results. He must therefore study symptoms, that he may not err in his methods of healing and preventing. He must keep his knowledge abreast of the Church's laws and decision, so that he may be able to save sick souls by the gentle unction of the Church's generosity. Like the skilful surgeon, however, he must not stay his hand where deep incision, or amputation, is necessary for the health or life of his patient.

The pastor is God's lawyer. In word and act he must plead His cause. That he may be able to do so successfully it is necessary for him to be familiar with the arguments and wiles of his opponents. The controversial literature of skilled masters in books and magazines supplements his education in the Church's deposit of truth in revelation and tradition. He may be gifted with the graces of oratory in voice or gesture, or he may have to acquire these by hard study and practice. In either case the enormous treasury of Church doctrine, with its possibilities of application in endless variety, supplies him with material on all subjects. If he have faith in himself, and if he deliver his message earnestly and so that it can be heard by his audience, he is sure of pleading God's cause convincingly. For he has everything on his side, and his position secures him attention.

It is not only in the pulpit, however, that the pastor must hold his brief for Christ. He is the advocate of truth, justice and right when his parishioners come to him in their manifold difficulties. His common-sense and knowledge of the vagaries of human nature supply him with arguments that will hearten the weak and discouraged, console the troubled, persuade the sullen sinner, bring back the straying and overthrow the vicious.

The parish problems that St. John Baptist Vianney had to solve at Ars were those involved in the elementary passions of a primitive people. They had little or nothing of the complexities that modern conditions give to life in our country. There is a world of difference in the reactions of a Lazarus and a Dives to the allurements of gluttony, indolence and lust. What we are pleased to call progress has given a speciousness to sin that was unknown to our forebears. The ugliness of rudimentary impulses is cloaked by culture, and wan-

tonness struts abroad wearing the label of fashion. Social life and business relations with unmoral pagans tend to weaken Catholic ideals. Barriers are broken down, and laxity in morals, divorce, and dishonesty lose their abhorrence through familiarity. The pastor of today, seeing the havoc wrought in his people by popular magazines, newspapers, theaters and moving pictures, can sadly agree to the truth of the poet's lines:

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien
As to be hated needs but to be seen.
Yet, seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

It's an old, old story,—as old as the first days of the Church in the Roman Empire, and never were conditions so like those, as in our own day. The sermons and letters of the early Fathers could be printed with profit in our Catholic journals. Older even than that, for what else did Our Lord mean by His warning, on the Mount, against false prophets "who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves"? Yet it is always a new tale to the pastor, who sees the raw wounds in the young of his parish, and the scars of the poison in the old. When (he wonders sadly) will men learn that grapes are not to be gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?

These, and many others, are the problems that wring the heart of the pastor in our country. It is indeed true that he glows with joy at seeing the crowds who attend Mass on Sundays, in his church. He is full of thanksgiving to God for the multitude who receive Holy Communion frequently. But these are the ninety-nine! Somewhere in the darkness and the cold wanders the lost sheep. In almost every street of his parish there is a Catholic who has broken away from the fold. Here

is one married out of the Church, and rearing a family. There is the fruit of a mixed marriage,—baptized a Catholic but, by the death or carelessness of the Catholic parent, thrown into non-Catholic environment that resulted in loss of the Faith. In another house lives a father, or mother, who is giving scandal at home and abroad by neglect of Mass and the sacraments. What of all these, and of their offspring who are being robbed of their birthright?

It is beautiful to see the devout throng the church at all services, and these must remind the pastor of those other crowds in the far-off days, on the mountain and beside the Sea of Galilee, who looked and listened eagerly. But a weary Figure threads His way amongst them, saying softly: "They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. For I am not come to call the just but sinners to penance. I am not sent but to the lost sheep of Israel."

When the pastor counts up the temporal and spiritual favors which his people have received and are constantly receiving from God, and then counts the comparatively few who attend the week-day Masses, the Holy Hour and other non-obligatory services, he must, like Our Lord, look about him in bewilderment and ask: "Were not ten made clean? Where then are the nine?" Where, indeed! In the moving-picture palaces, in the streets, lolling at home, visiting acquaintances,—doing everything, and being everywhere excepting where they should be, at the Feet of Christ, thanking Him and praising Him Who is so good to them.

All this must ever be the ugly fly in the pastor's soothing ointment. He remembers, indeed, that Our Lord said: "For it must needs be that scandals come." He recalls the Gospel admonition regarding the ruthless destruction of the cockle, lest the wheat be injured, for "zowan" much resembles wheat, and their roots are

often intertwined. But before his mind is the vivid image of the Son of God Who, in spite of contradiction and opposition, preached His Gospel and sowed the seed that fell "some by the wayside, and some upon stony ground, and some among thorns," but—"some fell upon good ground and brought forth fruit that grew up and yielded one thirty, another sixty, and another a hundred." He hears St. Paul speaking to him as to Timothy: "I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by His coming and His kingdom: Preach the word: be instant, in season, out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine."

St. John Baptist Vianney did much to reform his parish by his preaching. He instructed the people of Ars in their duties, and encouraged them in good works. To secure their interest, and bring them to church, his biographer narrates:

"Because his parishioners would not go to him, M. Vianney went to them. He was not contented with calling on every one on his arrival, but he made a habit of visiting regularly. Scarcely a day passed without his going to see some one or other. He would choose the hour of the mid-day meal, when all the family was assembled. He would greet the father familiarly by his Christian name, and then, without accepting even a glass of water, he used simply to lean against some piece of furniture and enter into conversation.

"But M. Vianney would not dwell at too much length on merely terrestrial affairs; very soon, and without any effort, he would begin to speak of heavenly things, saying just what was most suitable to his listeners, always showing great affability, even when they did not seem disposed to listen, and never making any reproaches even when they were most deserved. Besides, he was discreet enough not to outstay his welcome, and always left before he could be considered importunate."

Making due allowances for the differences in the social customs of a small French village in the last century and those of our country and time, every pastor can imitate our Saint's line of conduct with sure results. Nothing else has the value of a personal touch in human affairs. The best commentary on this is the recent successful growth of the house-to-house canvass in business that supplements, and frequently takes the place of, advertisements and mail-order catalogues. The visitation of the parish is a vital necessity. The almost constant shifting of the population of city and town, and the migration of so many from the country districts to the cities, bring a condition that can be met only by periodic visitations of the parish, and constantly corrected records. This keeps the pastor in touch with the spiritual needs of his parish, and enables him to plan and carry out proper activities for the betterment of religion amongst his people.

Besides the formal census-taking of the parish, the pastor will find it very profitable to make social visits. The absence of formality in these, permits him to acquire at first hand information concerning domestic and economic conditions that is very valuable to him. These visits serve also to make him better known to his people, who find in him, perhaps, qualities unsuspected before. A more satisfactory understanding is established than could ever be arrived at between pulpit and pew. Following the example of our Saint, the pastor can pass from general topics to special and needed remarks, and make his visit an occasion of instruction on Church doctrine and practices.

Archbishop Ryan, of Philadelphia, was an adept in this method. His genial nature, as well as his position, made him much sought after as a guest at social affairs. He was thus frequently brought into contact with non-Catholics, and with Catholics who lacked the knowledge

of their religion. No matter how distinguished the assembly at a reception or dinner-party, the Archbishop would soon become the center of attraction. Conversation would cease, and everyone would listen to his delightful reminiscences, and witty stories. Without any perceptible break in his narrative, His Grace would glide into an explanation of some practice of the Church's liturgy, or an exposition of doctrine. Thus he preached a sermon to those who would never have heard him in his Cathedral. There are many instances on record of conversions to the faith through this practice of the Archbishop, and many more, of Catholics who were thus instructed and strengthened. In like manner a pastor can make his social visit the opportunity to "point a moral and adorn a tale."

There are, however, occasions when the pastor's duty compels him to visit a family or individual, that he may properly correct flagrant faults or avert disasters. These are not pleasant works, nor is it pleasant for the pastor to have to denounce abuses from the pulpit. Often he knows there is no other way, and he therefore does his duty. He has very excellent precedents for his denouncements. Our Divine Lord did not mince words when He condemned the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, and warned the people against them. The Baptist excoriated the important persons who came to him at the Jordan out of curiosity. There is nothing timorous in St. Paul's condemnation of the Corinthians for their abuses at the love-feasts, or of the incestuous man of that city. Indeed, the stout Apostle recommends his method. "Even things without life that give sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction of sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise you, except you utter by the tongue plain speech, how

shall it be known what is said? For you shall be speaking into the air."

The pastor would be what Emerson calls "a mush of concession" if he minimized and palliated for fear of offending someone, when his duty is plain before him. He, of all men can afford to be positive in his utterances, and his trumpet must give forth no uncertain sound. George Bernard Shaw says: "Unless you say a thing in an irritating way you may as well not say it at all, because people will not trouble themselves about anything that does not trouble them." The pastor who would follow the method of Heli, in his reprimand of his vicious sons, would stultify himself, and his half-hearted rebuke would be of no avail. "Do not these things, my sons, these very wicked things," said the old high-priest. His sons shrugged their shoulders and continued their evil ways.

The pastor who does his duty without fear or favor, may expect criticism and animosity, and will surely receive both, and much more. Only oysters, and their brother-invertebrates of humanity, have no enemies. The loudest cries against Our Lord in Pilate's court came from the buyers and sellers He had whipped out of the Temple, and from the Scribes and Pharisees He had exposed. So it has been ever since. "The servant is not greater than his master." The Apostles "rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." Every age has its Savonarolas and Hildebrands who "loved justice and hated iniquity," and paid the penalty. Yet history has crowned these with immortelles, while the safe and sane are buried in oblivion, marked in death with their motto in life: R. I. P.

The priest who fearlessly follows duty, that "stern daughter of the Voice of God," in the work of his pastorship will suffer, for there is no one who does

not long for men's praise and who does not dread their blame. He may be judged a failure in the eyes of the world. Seeing the world's standards, however, he knows that he is most successful when he has nothing of what the world counts success. The priest's success is in the verdict of his own heart that he is doing God's work. His reward comes not from men, but from the God he serves, as it came to St. John Vianney.

CHAPTER VII

THE PASTOR AND PARISH SOCIETIES

WITH the common sense that marked all his works St. John Baptist Vianney realized that something more than sermons and visits to his parishioners was needed for the sanctification of his parish. The virtuous as well as the sinners who had been converted, were alike exposed to the temptation of growing weary in well-doing. Some means were necessary that would make lasting the results of his public and private exhortations and that would serve to keep active, by mutual encouragement and example, the good resolutions called forth by the Curé's admonitions. Our Saint therefore organized in his parish the Confraternities of the Most Blessed Sacrament and of the Rosary. The event justified all his expectations. The devotion to Our Lord in the Eucharist, and to His Holy Mother, served to strengthen the faith and practice of the people of Ars. The members of the Confraternities became the Curé's aids in promoting the needed reforms in the village, and by their zeal they succeeded in bringing under his influences many of their recalcitrant friends and companions.

The example of the Curé d'Ars can be imitated in this matter with much profit by pastors in our country. In spite of most strenuous efforts on his part, there are always in a parish some whom the pastor cannot reach personally. From this class come most of his troubles. Either young and frivolous, or grown old in careless ways, they avoid any occasion that would

oblige them to listen to a sermon. They regard the short instructions of the early Masses on Sunday as irksome, and generally manage to miss them by coming late to Mass. If these persons attend the services of the periodic Parish Mission, they consider the sermons as part of a penitential observance, and the fiery eloquence of the missionary, while exciting their admiration, generally suffers the fate of the seed that fell by the wayside, or among the thorns, or on the stony ground. Not having a deep knowledge of their religion, they fall an easy victim to circumstances that embroil them in a mixed marriage, or they grow more careless in receiving the sacraments, and finally many fall away altogether from the practice of their religious duties.

If, however, such persons can be induced by their good friends and acquaintances, to become members of the Parish Societies they may be saved. Through their affiliation in these societies they are brought into personal touch with the priest in charge, and make friends among the religious and well-instructed members of the parish. Habits of regularity in frequenting the Sacraments are formed, in accordance with the rules of the Society. At the religious services they receive the instruction in the doctrines, laws and practices of the Church which they would not otherwise obtain. Added to all this are the graces they can gain as members of the Society, by which they are strengthened in their daily life. They come to have a different idea of religious matters, and in their turn can become apostles for the spread of God's Kingdom on earth.

Every pastor has reason to know and lament the leakage that goes on continually in his parish. It is appalling to consider this leakage in the aggregate. If all the Catholics who were born and bred in Catholic homes in the last fifty years had remained faithful to the practice of their religion, the Church in this country

would number very much more than the one-fifth of the population that statistics count today. If we were to compute the number of children who were educated in the parish schools, Catholic convents and colleges in the last twenty-five years throughout this country, and who today are living outside the membership of the Church, we would realize the practical effect of the leakage that is so much deplored. The pastor whose hand is on the pulse of his people, knows well the period of life wherein lies the danger of perversion and defection, and the causes of this lamentable condition.

He sees the hundreds of children in his school obedient and dutiful. With their secular education they are taught the doctrines of the Church and the principles of morality. They have before their eyes the splendid object-lesson of the devoted lives of their religious teachers. They are trained to attend Mass on Sundays and Holydays, and to receive the Sacraments regularly. They are made to understand the importance of all this, and their duty as Catholics. They are a touching sight in the sweet innocence of their childhood purity, as they take part in processions and other Church services.

By the law of averages, however, the pastor knows that a certain proportion of these children, after they have grown into manhood and womanhood, will marry out of the Church or become the victims of evil habits that will render them careless in fulfilling their religious duties, and they and their children's children will be lost to the Church. The pastor realizes sorrowfully just what causes this lamentable state. When they have finished school, and lost touch with the Brothers and Sisters, economic conditions will bring many of these children into close association with vicious and unbelieving persons. They will be swayed by these, and will

drift away gradually from the practices of their childhood. The precepts and examples of that time will be supplanted by the specious influences of the pagan world in which they were forced to earn a living. If this happens in the green wood (and it does, alas!) what calamities lie in wait for the dry wood, those children who have not had the advantage of a Catholic school education? Yet the pastor will find parents who, in spite of warnings and exhortations, will not send their children to the parish school.

The pastor cannot be blind to these facts. He must face the conditions that confront his young people in the dangerous period that comes after the schooldays are ended. How, then, will he keep his boys and girls in sympathy with himself and their parish church after they have been freed from the surveillance of school? What means has he to preserve and continue in adolescence the training of childhood, so that it will solidify into a secure structure of practical religion in the adult? The life of St. John Baptist Vianney gives the answer. The pastor can use the same methods that enabled our Saint to win the young men and women of his village from the fascinations of the cabarets and dancing-platform. The dangers that bring disaster to our young people, however, are much more varied and specious than those of Ars in the last century. The pastor must therefore be prepared to meet them with a more elaborate equipment than that which sufficed the saintly Curé.

This is an age of prophylaxis by anti-toxins. The medical fraternity has learned that it is easier and more satisfactory to prevent disease than to attempt to cure after disease has set in. This is the scientific version of the old saw, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," and a practical demonstration of the Irish maxim, "It's easier to keep a man out than to

get him out." This method, in religious activities, has passed the experimental stage.

By organizing his parish societies to suit the needs of all classes, the pastor is able to keep in touch with his people. The society of Boy Scouts, or an organization on similar lines, attracts and holds the younger boys of the parish during their school years. Through membership in it the boys who attend the public schools are brought into close association with the boys of the parish school. From the tenderfoot grade to that of the eagle star, each degree supplies the boy with instruction and practical work on lines that hold his unflagging interest. The study of trees, plants and stones not only trains his mind to observe and compare, but gives him also a store of interesting information and broadens his mind by a knowledge of things not found in the city streets. The hikes in the woods, and the tests of following trails, making a fire and preparing a meal with scantiest resources, form not only an attractive game to the boy but teach him self-reliance that will be of great value in after-life. His pledge, "On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the Scout Law; to help other people at all times, to keep myself physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight" develops his character on the highest plane of decent manhood. The grouping of the boys into small companies, each in charge of a scout-master, ensures unobstrusively the individual attention so necessary for results with boys, and obviates the herding system that stultifies all efforts to improve them.

The priest in charge of the Scouts has ample opportunities to become the confidant and intimate friend of every member. Through this personal contact he is in a position to foster religious vocations and to direct the future life of the boy, for the friendship thus begun

continues when the boy has grown up, and the priest remains his confidant and counsellor in manhood as in boyhood.

As boys differ widely in their temperaments, the priest in charge of their societies must plan to hold them by various ways and means. While the activities of the Boy Scouts appeal to some, there are others who must have a more strenuous outlet for their exuberance. To these the successive round of base-ball, foot-ball and basket-ball proves more attractive. Between seasons cross-country runs, jumping contests and other athletic exercises will keep them busily interested.

Some of the boys of the parish will have no inclination to sports. To keep his influence over these the priest can organize a parish Band for any who show a taste for music or a capability for training. He will be surprised at the latent talent in this direction to be found in the ordinary boy, and at the rapidity with which results will be obtained. Boys who are in danger through their desire for reading can be directed by the priest in the way of good literature from the Parish Library, and thus he can cultivate in them a taste for the right sort of books.

The main purpose is accomplished when the boys are, with proper companions, under the direct supervision of the priest. Thus will they be guided safely through those formative years when boys are most amenable to good or evil, and when crime and religion alike recruit their largest numbers.

It is a most fascinating work for the priest to shape the future lives of his boys, and, apart from its spiritual side, it is of great value to himself in renewing his own youth. No disaster can reasonably be feared for boys who are made part of the life of their parish. Growing up in friendly intercourse with their priests, they will naturally hold a personal interest in everything concern-

ing the parish in which they reside. Membership in the Young Men's Societies will later on keep them still in close touch with parish activities, and as they grow older they will be the understanding aids of the pastor in all that concerns their religion and the maintenance of parish works.

While the work in Girls' Societies must follow the same general lines as that of the Boys', there are subtleties connected with it that require delicate tact and discretion in the priest-director. The object of these societies, as that of those for boys, is to direct natural tendencies along lines that will keep the members closely associated with the works of the parish. Boys are by nature nomadic, and influence over them can be secured only by giving this restlessness outlets that will be useful and not harmful. The natural tendency of girl-nature is toward domesticity. However advanced a woman may think herself, or wish to be considered, she is at heart the housewife and mother that nature intended her to be. Boys are naturally gregarious, and instinctively follow a leader. Girls tend to form acephalous groups. This difference in psychology makes the directorship of girls' societies much more difficult than that of boys. On the other hand, girls may be more easily swayed through appeals to their emotions, and although their enthusiasms will be likely to center more about the by-products of the organization than its real object, nevertheless much good can be done.

There is little labor in securing and holding the smaller girls of the Parish School in membership of a Society similar to the Boy Scouts; and the girls in the higher grades, in the Angels' Sodality or the Children of Mary. The efforts to bring the girls of other schools into these societies will be well rewarded by the profit they will receive in making friendships with the

religious teachers, and in learning the doctrines of the Church from the addresses of the Spiritual Director.

Even more dangerous for girls than for boys, however, is the period in which many of them are compelled by circumstances to go out into the world to earn a living for themselves, or to aid in the upkeep of the family. The freedom from parental restraint which their position as wage-earners too often secures them, opens the door to many enticements. The life of such girls while away from home is often a sealed book to their family. The influence of evil associates, and the new familiarity with false standards of truth, honesty and purity, will leave no visible mark.

The surest way to safeguard and protect these innocent girls is, membership in the Parish Sodality of the Blessed Virgin. To secure this, the priest in charge will strain every effort. By his instructions he can warn them of the dangers that they may not be aware of. He can supply them with arguments in defense of their Church which they can use when they are subjected to attacks on their religion. He can point out the speciousness of the beguilements that threaten their innocence. When there is need, he can do much by personal persuasion in special cases that he learns of in his official position. Frequent social entertainments will satisfy the natural desire for recreation and amusement among the younger members, while lectures and games will hold the interest of the more serious-minded. A Dramatic Club will often be found of service for the ambitious, and a reading section, directed carefully, will be of profit to the "intellectuals" of the Society. The musically inclined can find an outlet for their talents in an orchestra, or in a singing section, or in both. By combining the qualities of Job and Machiavelli with his own common sense, the Spiritual Director will secure the purpose of the Society. That is, to hold its mem-

bers close to the parish church while bridging over the dangerous period of their womanhood.

A series of societies like those outlined will serve to unite the children and young people of the parish with their pastor and fellow-parishioners. This result, however, will not be obtained without many disappointments and trials. To work with human nature for a tool means always heartbreaks. Success nevertheless will justify and repay abundantly all the labor and hardship endured. The young people so trained will continue naturally their parochial attachments in their adult years. The women, married or unmarried, will form the mainstay of the Sodality, of the Women's Alliance and the similar societies that are the pastor's strong arm in parish activities. The men will co-operate corporately in the Holy Name Society, the Parish Club and the other organizations that the pastor must rely on for success in the material works of the community.

In a small parish where the pastor is alone in his work the members of the parish societies will be generally few in number. This will give him the advantage of a more personal touch. His efforts will also be aided very much by the more intimate relations that exist in a small community. It is very doubtful if the Curé d'Ars would have achieved in a large city the results he secured in his parish of two hundred souls.

On the other hand, where the pastor has the assistance of other priests there will be speedier results in the Society work. An interchange of interests will make the juvenile societies the feeders for the others, and all the associations working together will secure the object of all, through the united action of the priests in charge.

Whatever success may attend, in either a large or small parish, the organization and management of societies that promote the social life of the members and

increase their parochial interests, the pastor will find that, to secure spiritual results he must have one or more societies that are strictly religious in their nature. The social and educational societies will, of course, include in their regulations certain days for the Holy Communion of their members, but more than this is needed. Devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is the thermometer that denotes their level of spirituality.

However eloquent and frequent the pastor's exhortations may be in regard to this devotion, he will find satisfactory results only through a society that has for its inspiration the Blessed Eucharist. This may take the form of a Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, or the League of the Sacred Heart, or the People's Eucharistic League, or the Altar and Rosary Society. Whatever form it may have, and by whatever name it is called, the object is the same. The weekly or monthly meetings will include the Holy Hour, and the spiritual success of a parish is assured when a representative contingent of its membership unite in this adoration of Our Lord in the Sacrament of His love.

There is a charm about the Holy Hour that fascinates all who join in this act of public worship of Our Lord. We are overwhelmed by the tremendous privilege of the Mass, and Benediction is all too short for the loving souls who share the sweet condescension of His Blessing. In our private visits to the Blessed Sacrament we are indeed in His House, but we are in the anteroom and He is beyond the door. We step softly and make our obeisance to His August Presence. The Holy Hour, however, makes us live with Him the old days of Judea and Galilee. He is seated on the mountainside, and we cluster round Him. We bring our sick souls to be healed. We tell him our trials and troubles. We look at Him in love, and pour out our

hearts in adoration and thanksgiving. He is so near, and He is so gracious. So must those other men and women have felt towards Him in the sweetness of His nearness. He was to them the Wonder-Worker, the great Teacher, and they loved to be near Him and look at Him and listen to Him. Yet they did not know as we know. He is our God and Savior, and the hours we spend with Him are holy indeed and marked with gold in the calendar of our lives.

The pastor who keeps the Holy Hour with his people every week, or even every month, has an exceptional opportunity to instruct and to exhort. He is then the majordomo of Our Lord, and interprets in his sermon the language of the Host. Then, more than at other times he can make plain the many consolations to be gained from a private visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and the strength and comfort that come from making the Stations of the Cross. He can make clear the wondrous privilege of assisting at daily Mass, and explain the ceremonies of the Mass, which are a sealed book to many who attend, in obedience to the Church's laws, but who have not the interest that knowledge brings, and out of which springs the love that makes daily Mass a never-failing joy. In the Holy Hour the pastor can easily dissipate the vain fears that keep many from frequent Holy Communion, and he can expatiate on the tremendous spiritual advantages that must come from such a daily union with Our Lord.

It would be impossible to estimate the effect on the parish of a relatively large number attending daily Mass and receiving Holy Communion every day, yet every pastor will realize that there is such an effect. It is not only in the good example shown to the community, and the spiritual reactions in the home life of the daily communicant. There are, moreover, palpable graces bestowed on the parish through the devotion

and united prayers of those who assist at Mass and receive their Lord and Savior daily. Unexpected repentance of hardened sinners, reconciliations between the estranged, patience in sufferers, and countless other favors could all be traced to the intercession of the devout who each morning consecrate the parish, as they consecrate themselves, to a special love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Another advantage the pastor will find in making the Holy Hour with his people is in the opportunity it gives him for instructions on the Sacraments, the Commandments, the Precepts of the Church, the Mysteries of the Rosary and the Stations of the Cross. All these fit in with the spirit of Our Lord's gracious Presence, and have His sanction then more than at any other time. As have also the pastor's exhortations at the Holy Hour, on the duty of parents and children, the obligation of kindness, and in fact any topic that he realizes will be of profit to his people. There can never be a dearth of subjects there where the pastor is the spokesman of the Savior, Who looks with love on shepherd and flock.

And there need never be lack of a congregation. For the devotions of the Church's seasons can be held during the Holy Hour. The Lenten sermons, for instance, can be given at that time. The special prayers and veneration of the Saint who is the Patron of the parish, or the favorite of the time, can be recited during the Holy Hour also. The Office of the Blessed Virgin's Sodality likewise can be said then. Any other lure can be made of use for the uninitiated, and when the pastor has them with him before Our Lord publicly exposed, then he can make known the sweetness of the Holy Hour for its own sake, and Our Lord will do the rest. To prevent a wearying monotony it may be necessary to vary the form of the Holy Hour. Congrega-

tional singing can be used for the hymns, or these can be varied with the singing of the choir. A visiting priest can be invited occasionally to give the sermons. A procession of the Blessed Sacrament through the Church can be introduced at times.

Where there are a number of assistant priests in the parish great edification is given to the congregation, as well as variety to the service, by all the priests sharing in the devotions, each taking his part in reading the prayers, preaching the sermon, or giving the Benediction. If the pastor is without such permanent helps, he can achieve the same result by arranging with a priest in a neighboring parish to share the Holy Hour alternately with him, in their respective churches.

The pastor who will imitate the holy example of the saintly Curé d'Ars by giving himself with heart and soul to the work of the societies of his parish, may count unreservedly on the powerful assistance of St. John Baptist, and he will find himself and his work blessed and prosperous.

CHAPTER VIII

TRIALS AND DIFFICULTIES

THE lives of the saints show us very clearly that sanctification can be attained only through suffering. The straight and narrow road that leads to eternal life is the road to Calvary, and he that travels it must bear a cross as credential of his worthiness to walk the King's highway.

St. John Baptist was no exception to this fixed law. The many and varied crosses that were thrust on him during his life of seventy-three years, and especially during the forty-four years of his priesthood, and which he voluntarily took up daily, show clearly his worthiness of the discipleship that won him the halo of the Church. Every consolation that flooded his soul with sweetness was bought with the currency of pain. That is the way of the saints. His motives were misunderstood and made the occasion of cruel persecution. He was maligned by those who should have known and helped him. He was slandered and falsely accused. His work for poor children, the Providence Home for Girls, was beset with difficulties and suffered a continual struggle for existence. Prospering at last, it was closed by order of the ecclesiastical superiors.

The twofold purpose of this institution was the center of all the Curé's activities, and the motive and inspiration for the works that made him a saint. Soon after his appointment to Ars St. John Baptist realized the need for popular education amongst the inhabitants,

whose ignorance was the cause of much disorder and sin. Mindful of his own unfortunate school experience, he sought to educate the people by distributing books in their homes. This method soon proved itself hopeless, and the Saint resolved to open a free school. In journeying through the district of the Dombes (in which Ars is situated) to relieve the priests in neighboring parishes, the Curé found a sad condition existing. The unhealthful climate and the heavy toil of the poor people orphaned many families. The result was that these children, especially the girls, were in great misery and exposed to dangers in faith and morals. The Saint therefore resolved that he would combine two aims in one institution.

He secured a large house in the center of the village and opened it as a school and orphan asylum for poor girls. He named this institution "The Providence," and placed it in charge of two young women of the village whom he had sent for a year's training to a neighboring convent, that they might learn practical management and teaching. Both these young women, Benoite Lardet and Catherine Lassagne, were distinguished for their virtues, intelligence and common sense. It is an interesting side light on the clear-headed practical methods of the Saint that he preferred having his school and asylum under lay management, although he could have secured members of a Religious Order to take charge. The spirit of the Revolution was still active in the country districts of France, and doubtless the Curé realized that the prospects of success for his project would be better if The Providence were not in the care of persons against whom there still existed great antipathy. In later years, when his counsel was sought by some widows who had opened a hospital for incurables in Lyons, he advised them not only not to wear a religious habit, but told them that they would

succeed better in their work if they were careful not to be dowdy, but to dress up a bit (*faire un peu de toilette*).

In 1823 The Providence was opened, and for twenty-four years fulfilled the purpose of the founder. It combined a free school for young girls of the neighborhood and an asylum for a large number of girls from fifteen to eighteen years, who were received as boarders and trained for domestic service. After a short time an additional building was erected, and the complement of girls was raised to sixty. There was no income, and no endowment, yet the institute flourished. It was supported entirely by donations, and eye-witnesses have testified to the remarkable circumstances that attended very many of the gifts received by the Curé. He would be accosted, in his walks about the country, by mysterious persons who would thrust large sums of money on him and hurry away. Anonymous benefactors would frequently leave their generous donations at the door of The Providence just when there was an urgent need. There are likewise at least two well-authenticated instances of food being supplied in a miraculous manner. Once the wine, and at another time the grain in the granary were thus replenished without any human intervention, when the supply was almost exhausted.

The girls of The Providence were saved from misery and suffering. They were given an education sufficient for their state in life. They were carefully trained in their religious duties and, as a result, they were in great demand by wealthy families, for service in their households. Many of the girls became nuns, and many others married out of The Providence. These latter were supplied with their trousseau by the Curé, who also paid all the marriage expenses. It was quite evident that the Institution had justified its existence,

and yet, when at length it had reached a point above all anxiety, it became a storm center and was attacked on all sides. The academic authorities condemned it because it was under lay direction. Many of the parents of the village complained at having their daughters educated with beggars. These, and many more complaints about the clothes of the girls, their studies, etc., were brought to the attention of the ecclesiastical authorities, and in November, 1847, the Curé turned over The Providence to the Sisters of St. Joseph, who established a boarding-school in the buildings.

A free school for the girls of the parish was still maintained by the Curé, and two years later he was enabled to open a similar school for the boys, in charge of the Brothers of the Holy Family. Fifty years, however, had elapsed before the rest of France enjoyed the advantage of free primary schools that St. John Baptist had secured for the little village of Ars.

The two schools he had managed to maintain in spite of his enemies were something of a consolation to St. John Baptist, but the suppression of his beloved Providence was the bitterest grief of his life. He had conceived the idea, and had built up the place entirely himself. For nearly twenty-five years he had given it the best he had, and its subsistence had been his daily solicitude. It was a great blow to see the work of a lifetime swept away when the results of his labor had been so successful and its future was assured.

The Saint, however, submitted to the action of his superiors without a murmur, because in this affliction he saw God's will manifested. Catherine Lassagne, who was the Curé's devoted aid in The Providence from the beginning, and who kept a careful diary of his activities, wrote what was surely the Saint's own view of this event: "Blessed be God for all. It is He Who has thus willed it, without doubt, to detach His servant still

more from the satisfaction he might have had in doing good."

Great as was the grief suffered by the Saint in having to close The Providence, it was after all concentrated in one act. There were other trials, however, that he was forced to endure for many years. The fame of his sanctity spread abroad, and those who had been converted, or consoled, by his ministrations in the confessional, testified to the peace and joy which they had received. The result was that great crowds flocked to Ars to attend the services, or to make their confessions. The clergy of the neighborhood resented being thus forsaken by their flocks, and were not slow to voice their disapproval. Some went even further, and loudly condemned the temerity of the Curé d'Ars,—whom they considered so poorly equipped,—posing as a director of souls. Others were filled with indignation at such presumption, and sent the Curé a joint letter admonishing him, and advising him to abstain from such work, lest he should do harm. They instanced, as evidence of the Curé's unfitness, the shiftless manner in which The Providence was conducted, depending entirely on precarious alms. They proved his folly in compromising the clergy by the excess of his austerities. They made out, in fact, a very good case against him as lacking entirely in the wisdom of the children of this world. "Those were the days," said the Saint in after years, "in which in their pulpits and everywhere else, they left the Gospel to one side and took the poor Curé d'Ars as their text."

At length, as the expostulations had not the result they hoped for, the Curé's zealous fellow-priests formally accused him of incompetency, to the Bishop of the Diocese, Msgr. Devie. Two Vicars-General, accordingly, were sent to investigate, but they found everything most edifying. Two hundred cases of con-

science were submitted by the Curé to the Bishop, with his own solution of them. The Bishop examined the matter himself, and gave as his judgment that the Curé's decisions were perfect. He declared, moreover: "I do not know whether the Curé d'Ars is learned, but I do know that he is enlightened. He is a saint whom we ought to admire and take as a model."

Indeed, this was also the opinion at which most of his calumniators were forced to arrive. On more than one occasion it happened that a person who had expressed indignation at the Curé's words and actions, went to Ars to see for himself, and be justified in his denouncements. The result was always the same. The sight of the Saint at Mass, or in the confessional; the winning eloquence of his sermons; the devotion of the crowds that filled the church at all hours; the humility of the Curé which showed so clearly in his looks and words—all these filled the observer with the certainty that here indeed was a man of God, doing God's works, and who must be regarded as sacred. The Abbé Monnin, in his *Life of the Curé d'Ars,* relates an incident that illustrates how compelling was the sanctity of the Curé. A misguided priest, whose charity was for the moment overshadowed by his zeal, wrote to the Curé a letter which began: "M. le Curé, when one knows as little theology as you, one ought never to enter a confessional." The rest of the letter was in the same strain of criticism. The Saint immediately answered the letter. "Oh! what reason have I to love you, my dear and venerated brother. You are the only one who really knows me! Since you are so kind and charitable as to deign to take an interest in my poor soul, do help me to obtain what I have so long demanded, so that being replaced in a post of which my ignorance makes me unworthy, I may withdraw to some retired spot to mourn over *'ma pauvre vie!'*" There could,

of course, be but one result of such touching humility. The writer of the insolent letter went at once to the Saint to ask his pardon.

For nearly ten years the campaign of vilification went on against the holy man. The clergy who had mistakenly accused him of incompetency, made amends for their wrong judgments by treating him with respect and veneration. There were, however, wicked persons who resented the sanctity of the Curé because it was a reproach to their own lives. These tried to wrong him in the estimation of the public, and to discourage him in the practice of the virtues that were so hateful to themselves. Anonymous letters were sent to him accusing him of the most infamous actions. Rumors were spread abroad questioning his morality. Frequently, after spending long hours in prayers and penance, he would find in the morning filthy placards attached to the door of his house, upbraiding him for having spent the night in debauchery.

While all this wounded him deeply, the Saint never complained. He went about his duties with his usual calm, and did not abate any of his energy in preaching, hearing confessions, attending the sick and managing his beloved home for orphans. Long afterwards, in his sermons, he made reference to the severe trials of those bitter days: "We must ask to love crosses, then they will become sweet. That was my experience for four or five years. I was slandered, contradicted, criticized without mercy. Oh! I had crosses—almost more than I could bear. Then I began to pray for the love of crosses, and I was happy. I said to myself, 'There is really no happiness but in that.' One must never consider the quarter from which crosses come to us. They come from God. It is always God Who gives us this means of proving our love to Him."

God indeed permitted these heavy trials, that St.

John Baptist, like the other great saints, might be strengthened in virtue and sublime trust in God. The evil spirits, however, were not content with instigating and encouraging their agents to annoy the Saint. They themselves were most active in persecuting him in person. It is a commonplace to find in the lives of the saints that the extraordinary favors they received from God were often accompanied, or preceded, by diabolical activities. So it was with the Curé d'Ars. His sanctity and his inspired counsels in the confessional, made Ars a place of pilgrimage. Hardened sinners were converted from their evil ways, and men and women by thousands were stimulated and encouraged to practise virtue. The evil spirits resented this condition, and foresaw their occupation gone unless they could succeed in breaking, mentally and physically, the priest who was the instrument of so much good.

At first the assaults of the devil consisted in strong and lasting temptations to despair. The past faults and present imperfections of the Saint were brought before his mind in most vivid fashion. He saw himself shut out from heaven, and all his apostolate seemed wasted and useless. Not for an instant, however, did his faith waver. The turmoil of mind caused by these upsetting thoughts threatened to paralyze his zeal, but his humility and love of God won the victory, and the evil spirit had not the gratification of securing any diminution in the great work that was being done for God by the Curé.

Then the method of attack changed. The devil tried in every way to harass and wear out the Saint's body and mind, so that he would be physically unable to continue his good work. When, exhausted by the long hours spent in hearing confessions, and in preaching, the Saint would finally lie down on the hard planks that served him for a bed, to secure the few hours of sleep

he allowed himself, the wildest uproar would break out in his room. A sawing and boring of planks, and hammering of nails. A hooping of barrels. Drumming of fingers on the table and walls of his room, and on the water jug. A scampering of droves of sheep in the room overhead, and a galloping of horses under his windows. Mobs shouting in the courtyard. The room door thrown open with a bang and rough voices calling out the Saint's family name, coupled with some insulting epithet, or screaming scornfully that he was a *mangeur de truffes* (*truffes* was the dialect name for potatoes). Several times he was dragged out of bed, and once the bed was set on fire. The devils sought also to irritate the Curé by defiling the statues of saints and the holy pictures that he cherished. These savage onslaughts of the devils in person continued for thirty-five years, and did not cease entirely until a few months before the Saint's death. They thus synchronized with the years in which he was almost continually employed in hearing confessions and reconciling sinners to God.

When the first reports of these diabolical visitations were circulated abroad, they were received with doubt and ascribed to the Curé's imagination. The reality, however, was proved to many of the scoffers when they visited the Curé's house, and soon the truth was generally known and believed. The Curé himself did not hesitate to repeat the incidents of his nightly persecutions, for he supposed that a knowledge of them would serve to humiliate him, and that was what he wished. "The devil leaves us quiet enough," said someone to him once. "That is because you are so good," replied the Saint.

The one consoling feature of these diabolical attacks was that when they recommenced after a period of peace, or when they were particularly violent, almost

invariably the next day some great sinner arrived at Ars and was reconciled. The knowledge of this coincidence so strengthened the Curé d'Ars that he would taunt the *grappin,* as he called the demon, and defy him. Sometimes he would banish the tormentor by crying out: "My God, I will gladly sacrifice to Thee one hour of sleep for the conversion of sinners." Then he would drag his weary body to the church and begin another day of work for God.

This was the time when St. John Baptist heard confessions for sixteen and seventeen hours a day, in a little box of a confessional that in winter was freezingly cold and in summer insufferably close and hot. Once he said to a friend, "When I leave the confessional I am obliged to look for my legs, and then to touch them, to find out if I still have any." He used to say that "one hour of sound sleep sufficed to make him gallop." Alas! he could seldom or never get even one hour of sound sleep. Weary in body, racked by a dry, hacking cough, his mind was distressed by the terrible strain of hearing, hour after hour, the sins and sorrows of the world. "My God," he exclaimed one day, "how weary I am of sinners! When shall I be with saints?" Another time, as he stumbled half dead into the church at midnight, to resume hearing confessions, he said: "Ah! these sinners will be the death of me yet."

No wonder that the evil one thought he could keep the Saint from his work by breaking him down. But the devil wearied first. The attacks on the Saint became less frequent in the last years, and ceased altogether about six months before his death, as if the evil spirits had finally realized the hopelessness of their endeavors.

In this account of the trials and difficulties of St. John Baptist we have in italics the experience of every priest who gives himself wholeheartedly to the work of

his priesthood. The solemn prophecy of Our Lord, repeated to His Apostles at the Last Supper, has a personal meaning for all: "Remember My word that I said to you: The servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John xv, 20).

The life of everyone is indeed a warfare, and full of trials. Crosses are the common lot, but the priest is the marked quarry of the evil spirits. The experience and ingenuity acquired by the devil are exercised most vigorously against the ministers of Christ. All the long years of practice in virtue during the Seminary training; all the graces received in those years; all the strength of the sacrament of Holy Orders; all the graces secured by daily duties well done, are needed indeed by the priest, especially in the first decade of his priesthood. Every priest is a challenge to Hell, because on him depends the administration of the sacraments that cleanse and save the world.

It is a maxim of warfare, ancient and modern, that if the officers can be destroyed disorder will follow in the ranks. One ruined priest is a great victory for the enemy. One priest broken down by trials and sufferings is a handicap to Christ's work. All priests as officers in Christ's army must, therefore, naturally expect special attacks from the devils. The pastor in particular will be subject, like the Curé d'Ars, to criticism that is often cruel and unjust. Being a man of common sense he will realize, of course, that he is not divinely inspired. He should not, then, enter into any enterprise until he has weighed the matter well and discussed it with the priests of his household; or, if he has not this advantage, then with others who are experienced and intelligent, and who are therefore capable of giving advice. He should be amenable to suggestions, even from his subordinates, and should be wary

of corroboration that is often more a soothing flattery than an aid to success. It may be very humiliating to have to admit that Holy Orders do not necessarily impart, for instance, an expert knowledge of finance and the fine arts, but the pastor's failure to realize this bitter truth has caused many parishes needless great expenses, and has inflicted on many communities the architectural eccentricities in parish buildings that fill the beholder with wonder and amazement.

When, however, the spiritual or temporal betterment of the parish requires a certain line of action, and the pastor's judgment has been strengthened, or modified, by a discussion of the matter from all angles with sagacious persons, he should not allow himself to be deterred from his decision by adverse criticism. Apart from the fact that, as Aesop's fable shows, it is impossible to please everyone in any course of action, the pastor should realize that most of the criticism is only idle talk of those who do not understand the pastor's reasons. This sort of thing dies from inanition as time passes and the success of the pastor's project becomes assured.

CHAPTER IX

PROBLEMS

SMALL as was the parish of Ars, its two hundred souls presented many problems to its saintly Curé. There was need of stirring up religious practices in a place that was suffering from the dead rot which had poisoned the country. There was need of religious and secular instruction for the young, if any future was to be assured these people, who had settled down to the drudgery of "hewers of wood and drawers of water." The Saint saw his parish as Michael Angelo saw the block of virgin marble that he knew contained an angel which he must liberate by his art. The faith of the people of Ars was held captive by the strong bands of the devil, the world and the flesh, and unless it were freed from these it must wither away and perish.

Merely to weep over this condition of affairs and pray for heavenly relief, the Curé knew would have no practical results. To provide all human opportunities for improvement without prayer, would have been equally futile. Right manfully he set himself to work with both hands. He knew the words Our Lord addressed to the disciples who had complained of their lack of success in curing one possessed by the devil: "This kind is cast out only by prayer and fasting." Once, when a neighboring pastor was lamenting the sad spiritual state of his parish, St. John Baptist said to him: "You have done everything? Are you quite sure? Have you fasted? Have you given alms? Have

you prayed?" These were the means our Saint used to secure God's graces for the conversion of his parish.

So unostentatious, however, were his prayers, penances and fastings that for a long time they were not known to his friends or parishioners. Only by accident was the discovery made that his one meal a day consisted usually of potatoes, which he ate cold six days of the week because he boiled his weekly supply at one time. When he was forced by weakness to take something more substantial than this, he would make a sort of pancake called *mâtefaim* (kill hunger) and dine luxuriously on three of these, as he was fond of narrating when he had grown old. "While I was cooking the second I was eating the first; and whilst I was eating the second I was cooking the third. I finished my repast by arranging the pan and the fire, and I used to drink a little water with it." In his later years he was entrapped once into admitting his fasts in those first days at Ars. "Monsieur le Curé," said a priest to him, "they say that formerly you could easily remain for a week without food." "Oh no, my friend," answered the Saint naïvely, "they have exaggerated; the most I have done is to go for a week with three meals only."

Many of his parishioners brought him gifts of wine, meat, vegetables and wood, but these he gave away to the poor who called at the rectory. Frequently, too, he would be seen at nightfall, furtively going through the streets carrying provisions to some needy home. An eloquent commentary on the sterling piety of the Curé d'Ars is that, in spite of his habits of self-denial, when his brother-priests or his relatives visited him he was accustomed to have a suitable dinner prepared. He would then carve the meat, pour the wine and encourage everyone to eat and drink, partaking of

everything himself. Here was neither the pride of Plato or of Diogenes.

His bed consisted of a very thin mattress laid on faggots, with some straw for a pillow, but as all was covered by a clean sheet the deceit was not apparent. Often, however, he slept on the floor of his barn, with his head resting on a stone. More often he spent the night stretched out on the floor of the church, before the altar. He used to give away all his clothing, and when his laundress finally would supply him with only the linens he needed, he gave these away as well. "I have never forgotten my cloak anywhere," he said one day. In fact, he never possessed such a garment. He owned but one cassock, which served him in winter and summer alike.

His day was a constant prayer, beginning at two o'clock in the morning when he recited the Matins and Lauds of his office. At every hour he said a "Hail Mary," and at the recitation of each part of his Breviary he meditated on the Passion of Our Lord. He was continually offering ejaculatory prayers of praise and petition to God, Whom he saw in everything about him. All this mortification, almsgiving and prayer had but one object—the conversion of sinners!

Our Saint did not rest satisfied, however, to leave all to supernatural means. He preached sermons on Catholic doctrine tirelessly, and explained in clearest words the need of religion in men's lives. He went after sinners to their homes and workplaces, and exhorted them in most touching words. He secured the assistance of the civil authorities in closing the places where dancing and gaming and drinking were working ruin to souls. He established schools for the young, and gave them his personal supervision. Thus he solved his problems according to the admonition of St.

Theresa, "Pray as if all depended on God, and work as if all depended on yourself."

The Curé d'Ars had no difficulty in securing funds for his generous charities and for the upkeep of his parish works. His salary was very small indeed, and he had purchased the building for his beloved "Providence" by selling his equally small patrimony, but when he needed money for alms or expenses he obtained it at once. The fame of his sanctity made him the favorite repository of innumerable persons, who appointed him their almoner. Sums of money were constantly arriving by mail, or were handed in at the door of the rectory. His biographer, Mons. Vianney, relates:

"On one occasion he had to pay for a great quantity of wheat, and as his creditor had already granted him a long delay he could not ask him to extend it. He therefore took his stick and set out for the country, reciting the Rosary as he went. At the end of the woods that bound the parish of Ars, a woman stopped him: 'Are you the Curé of Ars?' 'Yes, my good woman.' 'Here is some money which I was told to give you.' 'Is it for Masses?' 'No; only your prayers are asked for.'—So saying, the woman went away without giving any name, and the wheat was paid for."

At another time the Curé said: "I am very worried, I owe more than 3,000 francs. Ah! one should be careful not to get into debt." The next day, however, he said to a priest: "Well, we are now quite rich; this morning I was rolling in money. The weight of it was so heavy I could scarcely walk. My pockets were bulging out. I was obliged to hold them with both hands."

Moreover, he did not hesitate, when the occasion demanded, to apply to those whose generosity he knew he could depend on. We have already seen how Divine

Providence also came to his assistance in miraculously replenishing provisions for his poor orphans.

Thus the saintly Curé was spared the anxiety concerning money which constitutes one of the greatest problems in the ministry of most pastors. Not only is it a problem, it is a humiliation as well to every priest. He knows he was ordained for the spiritual work of saving souls by preaching the Gospel, administering the Sacraments and offering the Sacrifice of the Mass. This was the golden goal he looked forward to during his years of preparation, when he earnestly and thankfully gave himself body and soul for the equipment needed for his vocation. He pictured himself "spending himself and being spent" in God's work, and at the end receiving an eternal reward for his labors. He has, therefore, good reason for being shocked when he finds that the edifice of his priestly labors must be erected on a foundation of dollars and cents. His ideals begin to totter when he discovers that to succeed he must combine in himself the qualifications of a showman, a confidence man and a commercial collector.

This is especially true if he has been appointed to the arduous task of organizing a new parish. Only one who has gone through the first stressful years of such a work can appreciate the cares and anxieties that must accompany him every step of the way. He alone knows the delicacy of his position, and the careful line that must be drawn between the temporal and the spiritual. He realizes the value of the immortal souls that have been entrusted to his care, and their many spiritual needs. But he realizes also the importance of the school and church that must be built and supported, that these souls may be fed the Bread of Life. Overzeal for the material works of his parish may spell spiritual ruin to many who do not fully realize their duty of contributing to the support of religion. Overzeal for

the spirituals can be blind to temporal needs, and that way lies financial disaster. There must be careful steering between Scylla and Charybdis, nor is the passage effected safely without grievous toll of physical and mental energy.

If the pastor's lot is cast in a parish already established, the money problem is scarcely less difficult. There is always the question of upkeep, of improvements; and perhaps there is need to erect new buildings. Always there is the apathy of the many who are content with things as they are; and always there is in the parish a class most fertile in specious reasons for defense of their pocketbooks, who resent and even oppose any requests for contributions for any purpose. It happens sometimes that a priest succeeds to a charge where death has mercifully released the pastor from such contentious factions. The new man will be very much surprised (and if he is the right sort he will be very much amused) to find among the valiant defenders of the old order, and its loudest champions, those who in the lifetime of the former pastor were his chief worry, because of their lack of interest and support. Their grievance against the new pastor is very likely to take the form that what is proposed now had never been done before, although they may have criticized his predecessor for not having done those very same things!

Amazing as such a complex may seem, it is not at all unusual, and every pastor knows to his sorrow the many and weird forms it takes. In the meantime, there are the overhead, current, and extraordinary expenses to be paid, and for the wherewithal to meet these the pastor must depend in greater part upon the voluntary offerings of the parishioners. Violent diatribes on duty and obligation of the faithful to support religion are heard with stolid indifference by the delinquents. Pathetic appeals leave them cold. Dras-

tic measures of pressure may succeed for a while, but the result from them is not lasting, and they very often cause bitterness, and worse. This is a problem that is apt to curdle the milk of human kindness in the pastor, and ride through his dreams on a nightmare of dollar marks.

There is, however, a solution to this difficult problem which experienced pastors have found to be always successful. It is based on the truism that lack of interest in the material side of religion is due to lack of knowledge of the spiritual. Every parish, new and old, is maintained by those who realize the preciousness of their gift of faith and who, in loving service, generously testify their gratitude to God according to their means. The number of these can be increased until it embraces all in the parish. It is simply a matter of instructing "in season and out of season" those who, through wrong training or early neglect, do not understand, so that they will learn to value rightly their gift of faith. It consists in teaching children and adults alike a love of their religion, and a pride in it, so that they will appreciate God's gifts to them.

When people come to know and understand the sweetness of practical religion, and its strength and support in life's trials, then they will have a vital and personal interest in all that concerns their spiritual life. When the hours of service are arranged with a view to the convenience of the parishioners. When opportunity is given to hear Mass at seasonable hours not only on Sundays and Holydays but on week-days as well. When the Sacraments are recognized as instituted for the people, as they were meant to be, and their administration is not regulated by personal whim or prejudice. When the priests of the parish are easily accessible to all who require their aid and counsel. When, with all this, the affairs of the parish are con-

ducted with the promptness, courtesy and consideration that mark any business house—then there will be no money problem. The parish support will come, not from the few but from the many. Individual contributions may not be large in all cases, but the accumulation of numbers will make up a satisfactory total.

In thus solving a vexing problem the pastor is, after all, imitating St. John Baptist Vianney. His flock learned the sweetness of God and of His Holy Church from the words and life of their pastor, and out of that knowledge arose the generosity that enabled the Saint to support his many benefactions. He was noted for his politeness and courtesy, even under most trying circumstances. He was absolutely selfless in his devotion to the service of those who sought him in the confessional, and out of it. He preached constantly on the love of God, and the shame and horror of offending Him Who is so good to us.

We know, however, that the Curé d'Ars did much more than all this, through his love for God and for the conversion of the parish—so much more, indeed, that he became a saint. The sturdy constitution he had inherited from a long line of rugged French peasants, enabled him for more than forty years to fulfil every demand of his active ministry even while his food was most meager and he slept but a few hours. In reading of the penances and mortifications of our Saint, the most natural judgment would be that imitation of such a life is physically impossible for us, who live in such different circumstances, and who lack his robustness of nature. But at once there come to our mind the very recent lives of Père Charles Eugène de Foucauld, Father William Doyle and Matt Talbot. The Parisian exquisite and intellectual; the jovial, fun-loving Jesuit playing his cricket with zest, the chum and friend of all sorts of men; the Dublin laborer who

seemed but little different from his fellow-workmen, even to the priests of his parish. Here were three lives, in our own day and conditions, utterly unlike in everything but their love of God and consequent desire to suffer for Him, yet they approached very near, perhaps in some ways even surpassed, the austerities of St. John Baptist Vianney. Should we wonder, then, since the Church has made the Curé d'Ars the Patron of all priests, if God and the angels see many of his clients living in their own way such mortified lives as made him a saint? It was only after his death that the world knew how closely Cardinal Herbert Vaughn, the Archbishop of Westminster, had followed the example of his brother-Cardinal, St. Charles Borromeo, the Archbishop of Milan, in austerities which none had suspected during the lifetime of either.

The blooms of sanctity are as varied in form, and color, and fragrance as are the flowers of our gardens, and, like them, each is lovely in its own hue, and shape, and perfume. All God's saints, whatever be their station in life, have this in common, that they are never objectionable. As Enid Dinnis states it: "Sanctity lives in an atmosphere of its own. When holiness becomes sanctity something happens. The saint has not merely reached a summit, he has annexed a treasure deposited there, a treasure which radiates his being, and perfumes his surroundings." True sanctity is never eccentric in its ways, or disagreeable in its manners, although its counterfeit may seek to deceive by such methods. Long ago Coventry Patmore denounced the popular fallacy that it is difficult to live with a saint, and he showed clearly that the man who would make living with him difficult proves by that very fact that sanctity is lacking in him. God's saints more than anyone else know the true meaning of St. Paul's words: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth

not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never falleth away; whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed" (I Cor. xiii, 4-8).

Aptly has the author of *The Rod, the Root and the Flower* described the inconspicuousness of saints:

"There is nothing outwardly to distinguish a 'Saint' from common persons. The Saint has no fads, and you may live in the same house with him, and never find out that he is not a sinner like yourself, unless you rely on negative proofs, or obtrude lax ideas upon him and so provoke him to silence. He may impress you, indeed, by his harmlessness and imperturbable good temper, and probably some lack of appreciation of modern humour, and ignorance of some things which men are expected to know, and by never seeming to have much use for his time when it can be of any service to you; but, on the whole, he will give you an agreeable impression of general inferiority to yourself. You must not, however, presume upon this inferiority so far as to offer him any affront; for he will be sure to answer you with some quiet and unexpected remark, showing a presence of mind,—arising, I suppose, from the presence of God,—which will make you feel that you have struck rock, and only shaken your own shoulder.

"I have known two or three such persons, and I declare that, but for the peculiar line of psychological research to which I am addicted, and hints from others in some degree akin to these men, I should never have guessed that they were any wiser or better than myself or any other ordinary man of the world with a prudent regard for the common proprieties. I once asked a

person, more learned than I am in such matters, to tell me what was the difference. The reply was that the Saint does everything that any other decent person does, only somewhat better and with a totally different motive."

For this reason, many are the hidden saints who live out their lives unknown even to their intimates. Sometimes the depth of their sanctity may be revealed by some chance or crisis in their lives, and then the knowledge that they were different from what they seemed comes with a shock. It was only when Matt Talbot had been stricken unconscious and taken to the hospital that the doctors found the great cart-chain about his waist and the tight ropes that bound his arms and legs. Yet he had worn these instruments of torture for forty years every day as he went about his arduous work in a lumber-yard, but had carefully removed them when he had gone voluntarily to the same hospital for treatment, some time before his death. The Curé d'Ars, likewise, employed as long as he could many artifices to conceal his austerities, and no doubt the same could be said of other saints, ancient and modern.

All of which should go far in relieving any anxiety a priest may feel in carrying out his desire to imitate the Curé d'Ars lest he should seem eccentric and different from his fellows. Sanctity is not standardized, and its externations in daily life are governed by no fixed rules. Many reasons are conceivable why a priest may not be able to subsist on a single daily meal of cold boiled potatoes; but there are many reasons also why the fare of his Rectory need not resemble the menu of a fashionable hotel. One cogent argument is that medical science has made it very clear that nearly all bodily ills come from over-eating and drinking. As a celebrated doctor has said, "We Americans dig our

graves with our teeth." The rosy-cheeked, hale and hearty octogenarians who are active in every Trappist monastery are another reason for taking their frugal fare, instead of that of Lucullus, for a dining-room pattern.

As the average priest has in his domestic affairs scarcely more privacy than a captive goldfish, he could not sleep on a bed of faggots, or use a stone for a pillow, without creating consternation in his household. His own common sense, however, will make him know the incongruity of luxurious furniture in the bedroom and living-rooms of one whose Model is He Who "had not where to lay His head." For the same reason, while social customs require that the public rooms of the rectory be furnished in a decent and becoming manner, the priest's good taste will prevent the introduction of any extravagance that would not be in keeping with the home of him by whom "the poor have the Gospel preached to them."

The position of a priest in the social customs of our country compels him to maintain the dignity of his office by cleanliness and neatness in his person and clothing, but for the same reason he avoids the extremes of fashion that denote "the man about town." There is a difference that is easily recognized even by the uninitiated, between the clothes of a well-dressed priest and those of a fop. We have the authority of Thomas Carlyle's Professor Teufelsdrockh for the assertion that clothes have a psychological effect on men; on the wearer of them as well as on those who observe him. Clothes indeed may not "make the man," but they make the man conscious of his appearance, and all that this implies. It is very difficult for a man to retain his self-respect if he is slovenly in his habits or untidy in his dress. We read of the men in the Civil Service stationed in distant posts of British India who

dress carefully every evening for dinner although living perhaps hundreds of miles from another white man. Each of these realizes the moral effect on himself of clean linen and brushed clothes, as well as the need to uphold properly the dignity of his position as representative of the Empire among the native population. For a higher reason the priest, even though his parish is in a lonely country district, is careful to maintain his personal neatness and cleanliness because he is the representative of the Church and the custodian of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

The Curé d'Ars of course followed the custom of his country, in wearing a cassock out of doors as well as in the church and rectory, but it is noteworthy that while his cassock, shoes and hat were often old and worn, they were always well brushed and clean. So, too, must have been the seamless robe of Him Who walked the dusty roads of Judea and Galilee.

The very modest salary and emoluments that our priests receive, and the many expenses that are necessary to maintain the dignity of their position make it difficult for them to be as generous as they would wish in their almsdeeds. Every priest arranges, nevertheless, that a very good proportion of his income is devoted to charity. Very frequently he meets with opportunities in his parish work, and these he not only relieves as far as he can with financial aid, but he gladly gives his personal interest as well, where it is required. Much more valuable than money, very often, is the moral comfort the priest can supply to the distressed and grief-stricken. By the expenditure of a little time and trouble he can secure nursing and medical aid for the sick poor and, if the occasion offers, use his influence to obtain employment that will preserve the dignity of some deserving poor family. He will not turn a deaf ear to the appeals of his brother-priests in the home

and foreign missions, but will make a sacrifice to help them in their work for God. This he will do cheerfully, because he realizes the great work they are doing, and in which circumstances prevent him from joining, excepting by financial aid.

He will find in startling ways the truth of what he practises as well as preaches, that a hundredfold reward is received by those who are generous in almsdeeds. For a like reason, no matter how urgent may be the needs of his own parish, the pastor will find that invariably God will reward a generous assistance extended to other parishes, at home or abroad, either through the advocacy of individual aid or by parish collections. There is a peculiar compensation in this matter. A narrow parochial spirit engenders stinginess, individually as well as collectively; while a broad, open parochial spirit that appreciates the needs of others brings its own reward in open-hearted generosity.

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CHAPTER X

RECREATION

IN THE latter years of the Curé d'Ars' life the number of pilgrims who sought his advice left him no leisure for recreation and very little time even for rest. In the first years of his pastorate, however, he found relaxation in working in the fields and sharing in the labor of repairing and decorating his parish church. In middle age, and before his duties became so pressing, he was accustomed to take daily walks in the village and the surrounding country. On these walks he recited his Rosary, or gave himself to meditation, and often the object of his outing was a visit to some parishioner.

The priest who is fortunate enough to have his charge in a country district can easily imitate the Curé in similar recreations. Where conditions make it possible for him to engage in the cultivation of vegetables and flowers, he will find such occupation both a healthful and interesting pastime. It has, besides, the added value of providing fresh food for the table, and flowers for the adornment of the altar. There is, moreover, no derogation of dignity for a priest to employ himself in manual labor. The rule of the Benedictine Order makes such work compulsory, in imitation of Our Lord in Nazareth. Père Charles Eugène de Foucauld was so enamored of this means of living like his Divine Master that every day, until the end of his life, he spent a certain number of hours in his garden, and working with leather.

Besides the helpful advantages which the priest himself will secure from such outdoor work, he can also be of great assistance to his parishioners through the knowledge and experience he thus gains. He is put in understanding sympathy with their lives, and is able to discuss their affairs intelligently with them, and so he secures an influence which he might not have otherwise. His trained mind sees angles hidden from them, in the questions which arise concerning their farms and stock, and he can therefore often find a solution for their problems.

Much of the unrest and discontent of our people in farming districts, which drives so many young men and women to the cities, arises from ignorance of scientific crop rotation, fertilization, proper cattle feeding, and land vitality conservation. Here is where the understanding pastor can be a benefactor to his people, materially as well as spiritually. The United States Government has established educational centers in almost all the farming districts throughout the country. There are, besides, highly efficient experts in the Federal Agriculture Department at Washington whose advice and aid are given gratuitously to all inquirers. By availing himself of these advantages, and encouraging his parishioners to do likewise, and by associating himself with the Catholic Rural Conference, pastor and people secure at first hand valuable information concerning farms and stock, which will serve to turn failure into success. By scientific methods an apparently worn-out farm can be made very often into a profitable one that will not only bring attractive financial returns but will hold the young men and women from the evils of the overcrowded cities. There is no danger that a priest thus vitally interested will suffer from ennui, or wonder how to fill in his hours. These will be all too short

for his absorbing work. The personal benefits from such a condition are obvious.

There is also another and broader view to this subject. Abbot Johann Mendel, whose biological experiments have made his name a household word among scientists, as ranking with Newton and Dalton, did his scientific work in the gardens of the Augustinian monastery at Brunn. Here, in a space of about two small city lots, he made 10,000 observations of pea plants, and deduced a series of laws of heredity which revolutionized all previous knowledge on the subject. While thus employed he neglected none of the many religious duties which his office demanded, yet the laws he formulated and proved are those on which the work of Luther Burbank and others was founded.

Every priest may not be gifted with the patient, painstaking temperament which enabled Abbot Mendel to achieve fame. Many, also, may be like Doctor Samuel Johnson, who declared he never could study botany, because he was so nearsighted that "to botanize, Sir, I would be obliged to crawl on the ground like a worm." An awkward attitude for that stout philosopher!

There is, however, the wide field of electrical research and application, open to the priest who has a mechanical bent. The very interesting study of radiology also offers endless possibilities. Moreover, every part of our country, excepting the extreme southern portion, has geological phenomena which will repay study and investigation. In this branch of science the priest will find not only absorbing interest, but through it he may be able to add to the treasure of the world's knowledge in a manner similar to that of the Reverend John MacEnery.

In 1825 Father MacEnery, who was then in his thirtieth year, was chaplain to the Carey family and

lived with them in Tor Abbey, near Torquay in Devonshire. He naturally had a good deal of leisure time, and he used this in exploring the caves that are plentiful on that coast. Near the Abbey was a famous cave called Kent's Hole, in which a number of fossil bones had been found by curiosity seekers who had no knowledge of the value of these remains. The young priest set himself very seriously to the work of investigating this cave, and was rewarded by most important discoveries.

Sir Arthur Keith, the eminent British anthropologist, gives enthusiastic testimony to Father MacEnery as having "turned the searchlight of science upon man's remote and buried past," and he thus describes the young priest's work:

"Such was the fascination of his new pursuit that every day of the week, save one, saw the young chaplain hurrying along the short mile which lay between the Abbey and Kent's Hole. He quitted the light and sunshine of the dale to breathe, in candlelight, the dank and musty atmosphere of the cavern, so cold and piercing that it penetrated to the bone. He had to work like a navvy to reach the thing he prized; for nature, as if jealous of her secrets, has sealed down her 'former creation' under a thick stratum of dense limestone or stalagmite. The chaplain, by deft use of pick, hammer and chisel, forced his way through this barrier into the thick stratum of red earth which lay beneath; in the stalagmite itself he found fossil teeth and bones, but it was the red earth beneath which yielded him the richest rewards. Deep in this virgin red earth, lying side by side with the bones of prediluvian animals, he found, with a shock of surprise, stone implements bearing unmistakable marks of human workmanship; this observation he confirmed again and again; the young priest had made a momentous discovery; he had proved the existence of man in antediluvian times."

Father MacEnery also investigated other fossil-bearing caverns along the coast and correlated his notes on his discoveries. While, unfortunately, the bulk of these writings has been destroyed, enough remains, together with the specimens presented to various museums, to enable the scientific world to rank him as one of the foremost founders in England of its Pleistocene paleontology.

It is evident, then, that the priest whose pastoral charge lies in a rural district has many enviable opportunities for works which are most attractive, and are nevertheless in line with his spiritual position. What sermons he can preach from texts which lie all about him in his daily life! The particular charm of the Curé d'Ars' sermons was the effective use which he made of the incidents and events of his parishioners' lives, to illustrate his application of the Gospel lessons.

How bright and attractive is the picture of the country pastor on rainy days and in the long winter evenings! Then is the seed-time for the spiritual and intellectual harvest of his parish. Then he not only prepares his sermons and stores up material by his general reading, but he also puts in order his notes on government reports, and of his own researches on local conditions of soil, mineral salts and timber. Then he reads and digests the latest books and journals on agricultural subjects, with a view to private advices to his parishioners, or to giving, perhaps, a public lecture at the District Organization meeting. It may be too that, like Canon Sheehan, he will find pleasure as well as profit in putting into print his observations on the interesting phases of human nature which are his daily contact, and which will entertain and instruct a host of readers. What a wonderful world he lives in as he reads the book whose pages the Hand of God turns for him in the varying seasons!

Much more complex is the problem of recreation for the priest whose duty lies in the city. Instead of the fresh, clean air of the open spaces, and the smell of God's earth that answers the call of his soul, he lives in peril of poison from the smoke of commerce and the dirty dust of the streets. These are indexes of the life that surges and pulses about him.

God never meant men to live in the teeming acres of a city where millions struggle for existence in the iron grasp of what we call progress. The protest against such conditions is seen in the marvelous growth of the suburban districts, where those who can afford to do so may live in a more natural environment. It is evident, also, in the feverish rush of city dwellers to get among the fields and trees for a few days or even for a few hours, that they may escape from their thralldom. The crowds which throng the city parks, those municipal sops to Cerberus, make a pitiable commentary on the civilization that herds humanity in inhuman congestion.

Where there are souls to be served and saved, there must be God's priests, whether in the depths of Africa, or the wilds of China, or in the crowded cities of our own country. Therefore, at intervals among the close-set houses of the city's streets, rise the church and school where God is worshiped and His Gospel taught. Close at hand dwell His priests, to be the strength and comfort of their flock. In season and out of season, day and night, they are at the beck and call of all who need their ministrations. Sometimes publicity comes to a priest for his heroic conduct in some disaster or calamity, but only God and His angels know the marvelous deeds that fill his days and that are only incidents to him in the line of duty.

No newspaper chronicles the long hours in the confessional, where the miracles of Judea and Galilee are

repeated over and over again; or the wearying searches for the lost sheep who wander out in the darkness and the cold; or the solace brought to the worn and depressed; or the brightness to the sick of the priest's early morning visits with Our Lord; or the hope and cheering strength he gives to those stricken suddenly in the watches of the night!

In the first years of the priest's ministry he is apt to feel that he must go on tirelessly. There is so much to be done, and the days are all too short for its accomplishment. He is young and robust, and it would seem like weakness to coddle himself and take care of his health. So his rest is curtailed, his meals are taken irregularly, he scoffs at precautions against inclement weather, and sneers at nature's danger signals. Nothing serious may happen to him then, although the mortality among young priests is extraordinarily high. He is nevertheless wearing out his vitality and drawing on his reserve strength. If he lives to middle age he pays the penalty for his youthful indiscretions, and is very apt to surround himself with a formidable pharmacopoeia, acquire an expert knowledge of diatetics, and become an authority on drafts.

It is a serious problem, then, how the priest who must give himself wholeheartedly to his duties, may prolong and preserve his usefulness without being either reckless or a hypochondriac. The solution lies in the practical application of the old adage, *"Mens sana in corpore sano"* (a healthy mind in a healthy body). He must realize fully that he is made up of a very delicate combination of mind and matter, and that the connection between these two is very much more intimate than would appear at first sight. Medical science has made very clear the tremendous effect that bodily disorders have on the mind, and how great is psychic influence on the body's condition of health.

The priest, therefore, should safeguard the mechanism of his body by observing the rules of hygiene in the care of his skin, teeth and hair. He should know food values, and the combinations that will supply the needs of waste and growth. He should avoid exposing himself to danger when his vitality is lowered by loss of sleep, fatigue or need of food. If an emergency obliges such an exposure, when his duty has been fulfilled he should not delay in taking the proper precautions against serious consequences. Above all, he should not consider such protection of his health as unpriestly, or out of harmony with religious zeal. He has Scriptural warrant in the act of Our Divine Lord, Who ate corn with the hungry disciples even on the Sabbath day. And St. Francis of Assisi did not hesitate to share the midnight meal of the novice who woke from sleep through hunger and demanded food.

A very important requirement for the spiritual as well as the bodily health of the priest is recreation of body and relaxation of mind. The rules of every religious institute make the time of recreation as imperative as the time of prayer. Everyone is familiar with the story of St. Aloysius, who, we know now, was as manly in his conduct as he was exact in his observance of the rules of his Society. When asked what he would do if he knew death would come to him while at recreation, he replied that he would continue his recreation. The pastoral clergy should be as careful about this matter as their brothers who are bound by vows, in the Orders, Societies and Congregations of the Church. The question resolves itself into what form of recreation is most suitable for the age of the priest and his condition of health, but recreation in some form or other is absolutely necessary.

The same arguments that warrant the expenditure by Colleges and Seminaries of large sums of money for

equipping gymnasiums, and for the maintenance of outdoor sports, so that the exuberance of youth may find wholesome outlet, hold likewise for the practice of physical exercises by a young priest. The very nature of his duties, arduous and tiring though they may be, calls for the employment of his body's muscles in other activities. If these activities can be secured out of doors, so much the better; and if they include the mental exhilaration of games requiring skill in competition, it is better still. For this reason the best form of exercise is found in base-ball, hand-ball and tennis, and their indoor substitutes of billiards, squash, racquet and basket-ball. After he has reached his fortieth year he cannot safely indulge in such violent forms, but after that age, as well as before it, he can find in golf all the elements of healthful exercise. For in that game he combines walking in the open air with the use of all his muscles in the variety of strokes needed to surmount the constant difficulties of the game. He secures, besides, the mental interest which arises from the necessary competition, if it be only with the redoubtable Colonel.

If the priest's circumstances permit him to keep a horse he is assured of most enjoyable exercise for mind and body at all seasons. In any case, however (unless incapacitated by illness), whatever his age may be he can devote a certain time every day to walking, which physicians agree is, after all, the best manner of taking exercise. It combines refreshment of the mind with exercise of the limbs and trunk. Even a walk in the city streets can be made most interesting, by keeping the mind occupied in the observation of the great variety of objects encountered.

After all, any exercise fails in its purpose unless the mind be stimulated together with the body. There is, therefore, this merit in the popular American pastime

of watching public sports. Apart from the locomotion incidental to going to and from the scene of the game, there is much physical as well as mental activity in the sustained interest of a good sporting event. There is also the added advantage that the observer is getting the benefit of the open air, which is far more conducive to health than a slothful sleep, or the idle killing of time indoors.

To criticise adversely a priest who devotes a part of his time to relaxation or any physical exercise, whatever his choice may be, is to advertise ignorance of the insidious dangers, spiritual and physical, which are apt to attend an uninterrupted sedentary occupation. Moreover, if any defense should be needed against such unintelligent criticism, there is abundant Scriptural warrant available. St. Paul could not have applied his similes from athletics to spiritual life so effectively if he had not been an active participant in the sports of his day, or at least an interested spectator of them.

Moreover, the New Testament relates how Our Lord advised the Apostles to retire for a while from the activities of their ministry when they had come to Him tired out, and He Himself accompanied them on their holiday: "And the Apostles coming together unto Jesus, related to Him all things that they had done and taught. And he said to them: Come apart into a desert place and rest a little. For there were many coming and going; and they had not so much as time to eat. And going up into a ship, they went into a desert place apart" (Mark vi, 30-32). Surely this is precedent enough to justify a priest in seeking rest from his labors by a change of scene. Medical science is very positive in its decision that such a vacation from time to time brings renewed strength to the jaded mind and body, and insures a return to work with added energy.

A priest, however, need not be spiritually idle during

his holiday. He has many opportunities to continue his priestly work, although in a different manner from the routine of his home duties. His daily Mass and recitation of the Divine Office, as well as his daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament, are a source of edification (often unknown to himself) to his companions and acquaintances. His very presence in a hotel, or on a train, may be the means of good to others. His priestly decorum, genial manner and friendly conversation will be very likely to dispel prejudice, and may serve as the beginning of an inquiry into things Catholic which will eventuate in conversion to the Church.

St. Francis of Assisi said once to Brother Leo: "Come, let us go and preach a sermon." They walked through the city and returned to the monastery, but the Saint had spoken to no one on the way. Brother Leo expressed his astonishment at this, and inquired when and where was the sermon to be preached. "We have already preached a very good sermon by our walk in the city," answered the Saint.

Profitable relaxation and recreation are also secured by the priest in the exchange of visits with his brother-priests and other friends. The entire relinquishment of all social inclinations is not expected of the priest engaged in the active ministry of the Church. The solitary life of a Camaldolese and the silent existence of the Trappist are special vocations. So many and varied are the activities of a priest in this country, and so various are the natural reactions from these, that the compensation of agreeable companionship is a necessity.

The priest who has two or three understanding priest-friends whose loyalty has been well tried, finds them a safety-valve which will frequently prevent disastrous explosions. They will prove themselves not only a tower of strength to him in his disappointments and hours of depression, but a healing poultice as well for

the wounds of life's conflicts. Well for him if at least one of his friends fulfils Emerson's definition: "A friend should be a thorn in the side of his friend. For it blots the sunshine, it turns the stomach to find, where one looked for manly resistance, or at least manly insistence, only the mush of concession." Precious stones are polished not with soft handling but by the abrasive buffeting of the emery-wheel. Many a man with possibilities for great things is coddled into mediocrity by injudicious flattery.

When Robert Louis Stevenson had toiled over his manuscript he would send it gleefully to his friend in London, Sydney Colvin, for commendation. Back it would come to Samoa with a commentary of biting criticism which made the author wince and weep. This was severe treatment, but it helped a great deal to make Stevenson the master of English that he became. Self-satisfaction and the lack of healthful criticism have often prevented a priest from becoming a great preacher. On the other hand, lack of encouragement for earnest effort has produced the same effect quite as often. Dreams of excelling which would have become realities in favorable circumstances have been shattered by a sneer. There is, however, a healthful tonic, as well as refreshment of mind and body, in an animated discussion among friends. Friendly rivalries in parish activities are stimulated, and the success of one priest in these, causes an emulation of the others, while any failure receives sympathetic condolence which is encouragement for further effort.

The training and life of a priest are so unique that he can never find any companionship so congenial as that of his brother-priests. With them alone can there be an understanding sympathy. His position, however, or his duties, or some special characteristic he may possess, may make it necessary or expedient for him to

associate with non-clericals. Thus, a priest who possesses the gift of music, or of any other of the fine arts, will naturally seek the company of others similarly gifted. In these and analogous relations there is no danger of disaster, nor will there be any eventuation other than edification and profit if the priest will bear in mind the conduct of Our Divine Lord when He was with men on earth. He found human solace in the society of Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary at Bethany. "The Jews therefore said: 'Behold how He loved him,' " when Our Lord wept at the tomb of Lazarus. He publicly showed His friendship for Zachaeus, "the chief of the publicans, and he was rich," and for Simon the leper. "He did eat and drink with the publicans and sinners," that He might benefit them.

In the eighth chapter of St. Luke we read that Our Lord "traveled through the cities and towns, preaching and evangelizing the kingdom of God; and the twelve with Him; and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary who is called Magdalen, out of whom seven devils were gone forth; and Joanna the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward; and Susanna, and many others who ministered to Him of their substance." The affectionate messages which St. Paul added to his Epistles show how deep was his friendship for the men and women of the early Church who had aided him and his companions in the work of the Lord.

We may be sure that the Hebraic proxy for Mrs. Grundy was not always complacent in these matters. Indeed the Gospel tells us that the "Scribes and Pharisees murmured, saying to His disciples: Why doth your Master eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" And on another occasion they said to Our Lord: "Why do the disciples of John fast often, and the disciples of the Pharisees in like manner, but Thine eat and

drink?" The outspoken St. Paul, whose frank opinions on circumcision and on eating the meat which had been offered to idols made him many enemies in the early Church, was not allowed to go unscathed. His indignant rejoinder in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, answering the critics of himself and the pious women who aided him and his disciples in spreading the Gospel, shows how bitterly he resented these strictures: "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Christ Jesus, Our Lord? Are not you my work in the Lord? My defense with them that do examine me is this: Have not we power to eat and drink? Have not we power to carry about a woman, a sister, as well as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to do this?"

Nineteen hundred years have not softened all men and women into charity, nor have they lessened the tribe of those of whom St. Paul warns Timothy: "And withal being idle they learn to go about from house to house; and are not only idlers but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not."

From all of which it is quite evident that a priest must be very discreet in his associations outside his own class. His friendship is a flattering compliment which the injudicious do not always appreciate. And in this jumbled world of ours, a keen vision is required to recognize the judicious. St. Jerome's advice to his young friend still holds good: *"Caveto omnes suspiciones. Quidquod probabiliter fingi potest, ne fingatur, ante devita."*

CHAPTER XI

SERMONS AND BOOKS

THE visitor to Ars today looks with reverence on the modest library which is preserved in the parish presbytery among the sacred souvenirs of the Saint. It consists of the books of devotion and works on meditation which he inherited from Father Balley, his old friend and preceptor, together with others which the Curé himself purchased in the shops of Lyons. The whole collection of books, although comparatively small, forms a splendid working library and testifies to the good judgment shown in their selection, as well as to the evident ambition of the Saint, when a young priest, to possess such books as would help him to become a good preacher.

While of no great intrinsic value, the human interest attached to these books makes them of priceless worth. The worn leaves, the markers here and there among the pages, the underlined passages, and the marginal notes in his own hand show the personal touch of the Saint as he labored with them in the preparation of his sermons. Labor, indeed, he did, in his first years in the priesthood, for he had no natural gifts of composition. He knew, however, that much of the success of his ministry depended on his preaching, and he therefore gave his best efforts to what was to him a most difficult task.

The latest biographer of the Curé d'Ars, the Abbé Francis Trochu, who had access to all the documents of the Canonization process, records that he often spent

seven or eight hours at a time in writing his sermons. His favorite place for this work was a corner of the vestment-case in the sacristy of the church. Here, after the many duties of the day, he would sometimes pass almost the whole night in composing his sermon for the Sunday High Mass. The method followed by the Curé was to take one of the sermons from his books and adapt its language to the capability and needs of his hearers, by using simpler words and by inserting illustrations from the lives of the Saints, with which he was very familiar. Often he made the lesson more practical by homely applications which would be easily understood by his audience.

When the actual writing of the sermon was completed he would then commit it to memory. This was no easy work, for when his sermons were printed after his death, each one filled thirty to forty pages. Many times he spent all of Saturday night at this memorizing. Sometimes, in spite of all his efforts, his memory would fail him in the pulpit, and he would have to leave the discourse unfinished. He persevered, however, until finally he became known as a good preacher, and was invited to give missions in the parishes of the neighborhood. The manuscripts of his sermons, which are preserved in the Church of the Canons Regular of the Immaculate Conception in Rome, show all the evidences of the care he displayed in their composition. There are many corrections in the text, and on many of the margins are written some words of Scripture, or the name of a saint, which he inserted as aids to his memory.

In addition to singing the High Mass every Sunday, and preaching the sermon, the Curé also delivered a homily on the Gospel of the day, every Sunday afternoon before Vespers. This consisted of a paraphrase of the text, with a simple, pious exposition. From the

opening of the parish school for girls in 1824—to which was added the orphanage called The Providence in 1827—our Saint gave an explanation of the catechism to the children every day at 12, in one of the classrooms. These instructions were couched in the simplest language, without any attempt at style or oratory.

In 1830 the constantly-increasing number of pilgrims who sought the Curé for advice, or for confession, together with the supervision of the school and orphanage and the routine of his ordinary duties, left him no leisure for the laborious method of sermon preparation that he had followed for fifteen years. Owing to the care he had observed in that long time, he had become well versed in theology and in applying in his discourses the Scriptures, the teachings of the Fathers of the Church and the lives of the Saints to the needs of his people. He had, moreover, acquired great practice in extemporaneous speaking, by his daily catechism lessons to the children, and his Sunday homilies. Therefore, after a novena to the Holy Ghost, the Curé began one day to preach without any immediate preparation, and from that day for almost thirty years (with very few exceptions) he preached every day without writing or memorizing his sermons.

His preaching, moreover, took on a new complexion. Freed from the difficulty of trying to recall what he had memorized he spoke naturally, with great feeling and ardor. He was no longer restrained by the formal divisions and subdivisions which made his discourses theological treatises, and, as a result, his sermons lost all the ponderous, artificial nature which formerly had characterized them. His fame as a preacher spread, and not only were his Sunday sermons attended by large congregations, but many pilgrims went to The Providence to hear his daily explanation of the cate-

chism. At first only the inmates of the school and orphanage and their teachers had assisted at these classes. Soon, however, people began to assemble at noon, and look through the windows of the room where the Curé was teaching. After a while not only the classroom but the adjacent halls and rooms were crowded, and the grounds outside. All this time the Curé fulfilled alone all the duties of the pastorate of Ars, besides delivering his regular sermons.

In 1845, when he had reached his thirtieth year in the priesthood, and was fifty-nine years old, Father Raymond was sent to him as an assistant. The Curé then resigned the sermon at High Mass to his vicar, and also the catechism in The Providence; but he reserved to himself the Sunday homily at Vespers, and he transferred his daily lesson in the catechism to the church, where up to the day before his death he continued these wonderful discourses that became an event in the daily life of Ars. The schedule of the omnibuses from Lyons and Villefranche was arranged so that their passengers could be present at the daily sermon. Great crowds, including many priests, made the journey solely for the purpose of seeing the Curé and hearing him preach.

His long years in the priesthood had been filled with meditation and prayer. His works of penance had put a fine edge on his soul, and his long experience in hearing confessions had given him an extraordinary insight into the workings of God's grace in the souls of sinners. Out of the wealth of this treasure he preached those daily sermons. He would open the little catechism, read a question or two, with their answers, and then he would launch out into a sermon which was evidently inspired by God. In burning words he spoke of the Blessed Sacrament, of the misery of the sinner, of the goodness of God always being offended and yet

always willing to forgive and receive back the penitent. It is no wonder that miracles of conversion took place each day in those who heard his fervent words.

The secret of the Curé's success as a preacher lay in the fact that he was a saint. His life was spent in close union with God, and his sermons were the soliloquies of a soul steeped in the highest spirituality. He said no new things. He had none of the tricks of oratory. But his soul burned with the love of God and compassion for sinners, of whose confessions he had heard literally millions. Like St. John, in his old age murmuring over and over again, "Little children, love one another," the Curé d'Ars preached always over and over again, out of the fulness of his heart, the sweetness of God's love, the depth of His mercy to repentant sinners, and the horror of sin committed against so good a God. And he was never tiresome. Even in his last years, when infirmity had made him almost unintelligible, the very sight of him in the pulpit weeping over man's ingratitude and God's mercy, moved the most hardened hearts.

Father Raymond, who had been assistant to the Saint for several years, testified, in the Process of Canonization: "I can affirm that I always listened to him with the same pleasure, although he repeated the same subjects, with the same ideas, and the same expressions." In his book, *Le Curé d'Ars Prédicateur Populaire,* the Abbé Trochu, commenting on this statement, says:

"Where, then, did these ideas and expressions come from? From meditation and the knowledge of souls. The prie-dieu and the confessional—these two words best explain the eloquence of St. John Marie Baptist Vianney during the last thirty years of his life. That priestly life, in spite of the multitude of things that seemed to absorb him entirely, was made up of prayer and union with God. That is why the Curé d'Ars drew

his doctrine less from the head than from the heart. What would have been in others purely natural reflection, was in him a meditation at once emotional and supernatural. In the night, alone in his poor room, he ripened in prayer the Scriptural text or the catechism question which on the next day, or perhaps several days later, he would develop according to the inspiration of the moment, for the good of souls. It is on our knees, as someone has written, that most things are understood fully. The importance of the prie-dieu in the private room of a preacher cannot be overestimated. It should not be merely an ornament but a piece of furniture in constant use. It is there that a preacher renews and refreshes his soul."

The testimony, recorded in the Process of Canonization of the Curé d'Ars, of those who had the happiness to hear him preach, agrees that, especially in the last years of his life, he gave every evidence of having received from the Holy Ghost the special gift of knowledge, in return for his prayers and his heroic practice of the evangelical virtues. Indeed, he knew himself to be so favored. Once, when he was asked, "What teacher did you have in theology?" he answered, "The same Teacher as St. Peter."

The following striking testimony was written by His Eminence Cardinal Sevin, the Archbishop of Lyons, concerning a sermon on the Blessed Sacrament that had been preached by the Saint:

"Orators and the masters of spiritual life have preached and written on the Eucharist in the light of faith, but the Curé d'Ars treats this subject with the clearness of the gift of the Holy Spirit that we call the gift of knowledge. As the first of these is obscure, so is the second radiant. The difference between them is the difference between a torch and the sun. The Curé d'Ars speaks of the Eucharist as if he had an inspired knowledge of the mystery; as if God had

swept from before his eyes all darkness, and had given him the gift to see as the elect see. When he speaks, his blessed faith strengthens all who perceive the echo of it, and they thrill with delight. There is more light in a page of the Curé d'Ars than in the most beautiful sermons of our most illustrious preachers. There is no parallel between the fruit that is to be gained from his teaching and from theirs."

The Abbé Trochu relates that after Père Lacordaire had heard a sermon of the Curé he exclaimed, "I wish that I could preach like that country priest!" Every priest who has learned of the great harvest of souls reaped by the Curé d'Ars through his preaching, must echo that envious sigh of the eloquent and learned Dominican.

It might indeed seem presumptuous to hope to possess the unction which the saintly Curé infused into his preaching, inspired by what he had learned from God Himself. It is, however, within the power of all priests to imitate, with the hope of a like reward, the energy and effort expended by the Saint in his sermons.

The priests of our times have many advantages that were not available to the Curé d'Ars. The curriculum of the Seminary now embraces instruction and practice in the composition and delivery of sermons which extend over several years of the course, and include voice-culture and gesture. With such preliminary training the young priest therefore begins his ministry not as a novice in preaching but as one who can improve himself as the years go on. Moreover, he has access to a multiplicity of books wherein he can find all information concerning the subject of sermon-writing and preaching. These supplement admirably the instruction he has received in the Seminary, and it is largely his own fault if he does not develop into a successful preacher.

The one undeniable fact, however, regarding this important subject of preaching is that there is no easy method of securing proficiency in it. As in everything else, satisfactory results can be obtained only by the expenditure of labor. This expenditure must naturally be relative, depending on the gifts, natural and acquired, mental and physical, of the individual. The born orator is as much of a rarity in the priesthood as in other walks of life, and even he must supplement Nature's bounty to him by hard work, if he would not be classed with the "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals."

For the rest of men there can be laid down no hard-and-fast rules. There are some who possess a quick mind and a natural fluency of speech. These will be able from the first readily to acquire information on their chosen subject, and able likewise to express themselves intelligently, with less expenditure of effort than their brothers who are not so well equipped. There is another class whose minds move slowly, and who have not a ready command of language. These must realize their limitations, and reconcile themselves to the necessity for hard work in preparing sermons,—at least in the first years.

All authorities agree that the safest and surest means of securing success in preaching consists in writing out the sermon carefully, and then committing it to memory. A fund of information on a subject, whether acquired slowly or swiftly, does not insure fluency of expression. On the other hand, glibness of tongue will not cover the lack of ideas. And knowledge, even when joined to a flow of language, will be unconvincing unless there is a co-ordination of thoughts, and a logical sequence of arguments. The way of obtaining the necessary unity of a discourse in its divisions and subdivisions, is by writing. Francis Bacon's wise saying still holds, "Writ-

ing maketh an exact man." The memorizing of a sermon can be facilitated very much by underlining certain words, or writing them in capitals; by making cabalistic marks at the points of transition; or by doing as the Curé d'Ars—writing in the margins some words or names that will stand out in the memory, and serve as signposts to the thoughts to be expressed.

How long a priest must continue the practice of writing out his sermon and committing it to memory, must depend on his own qualifications. Many brilliant preachers maintain this way of preparing their sermons all their lives. The average priest in this country who writes his sermons and memorizes them for the first two or three years of his ministry, will find that after that time he need write only a portion of his discourse; and this portion will become less as he acquires greater proficiency. This means, of course, that he has prepared the unwritten part, so that he can go on smoothly when he comes to the end of the part memorized. As he grows older, and becomes more confident, he will need only to write out notes, after he has selected his subject and thought it over carefully, and read up all information pertaining to it. There will never come a time, however, in the life of any sensible man, when he will undertake to preach a sermon without some preparation.

The great Lacordaire, when he was fifty years old and had achieved international fame as an orator, was accustomed to spend a whole week in preparing the sermons he delivered to the boys of the School at Sorèze, where he was in charge. Archbishop Ryan, of Philadelphia, who possessed the divine gift of oratory, used to retire for an afternoon and evening to his apartments in the Seminary, for the preparation of his monthly sermon in his Cathedral. A host of similar instances could be quoted, but these two are a sufficient com-

mentary on the presumptuous confidence of the youthful preacher who would be satisfied with the scant preparation for a sermon which a sermon-book would afford.

In such a practice there is an insidious danger that the young priest should be most careful to avoid. It is, of course, conceivable that an emergency may arise demanding a sermon, or an unusual press of duties may prevent proper preparation for a set sermon. In such exceptional cases the use of a sermon-book is permissible, and even advisable. In ordinary conditions, however, a sermon-book is intended only to suggest ideas to the reader, so that his mind will be stimulated into developing new thoughts on the subject to be treated. Even the most accomplished and practised preacher will sometimes find himself absolutely jejune. It seems as if all the possibilities of his subject have been exhausted. To read, then, a printed sermon of some celebrated orator, or writer, may serve to disclose a new angle, and he can then go on in his own way.

A steady diet of sermon-books is very disastrous. A young priest does himself as well as his congregation a great injustice if he makes a practice of taking his sermons from a book. Such a habit enfeebles his own powers, and if continued in, the priest in time finds himself practically unable to write an original sermon. There is only one thing in the world more pathetic than a young priest trying to repeat from memory the sermon of another, and that is an old priest trying to do the same thing. It is no easy matter to fit a borrowed sermon to present needs. Every parish has its own individual complexion. Therefore the use of a sermon out of a book must, as a consequence, result ordinarily either in the preaching of an unsuitable sermon, or in the expenditure of as much labor to make it suitable as would have provided an original discourse.

It is obvious that to be of any benefit a sermon must consist not only in fervent exhortations and appeals to the emotions, but must also convey to the audience some knowledge of the subject treated. It is equally obvious that this information will be beneficial only when it is made interesting, and expressed in intelligible language. A necessity therefore devolves on the preacher to make himself, by study and meditation, a possessor of the knowledge with which he must instruct his hearers.

When a priest is ordained, he begins his public life with a stock of learning that serves him as a foundation for a lifetime of study. He is like the merchant who starts in business with a certain amount of capital which he must use to the best advantage in investments, so that it may be doubled and redoubled in trade. The course in philosophy and theology in the Seminary has supplied the priest with principles and fundamentals, and also with methods and practice in applying these to the problems with which he will be confronted in his active ministry. The practical use of all this information, and its application in his contacts with his people in the confessional and parochial visitations, mature his mind. His experience widens, and his knowledge is augmented by his study of theological questions in books and reviews. He discovers depths which were only hinted at in his textbooks, and it becomes a joy to penetrate these and endeavor to exhaust their possibilities. In this pursuit he finds a wealth of material for sermons; indeed, there is "an embarrassment of riches." It remains for him only to digest and arrange in order his store of knowledge, which is constantly increasing, so that he may dispense it with profitable results to the faithful for their good. This he does by meditation, and by extending his readings so as to provide a vehicle that will render his message pleasing and agreeable to his congregation.

While thus securing an erudition which will be of benefit to his flock, he opens the door into a world of never-failing delight to himself. Whatever path he may choose to follow in this world of literature (and everyone has some special taste, whether it be philosophy or theology, or Scripture, or history, or liturgy, or sacred poetry, or science) he will find himself breathing in new joys at every step of the way. There is such unity in all knowledge that the correlation of ideas and the intertwining of facts not only give a fascinating zest to reading but also supply the preacher with an inexhaustible store of information on all topics. The application of such knowledge is what makes the difference between an interesting and instructive sermon and one that is prosy and tiresome.

The exemplification of this is found not only in Cardinal Newman's critical and historical Essays but in his sermons as well. In all his writings that great scholar and churchman shows the value of the general reading which he urges so strongly in his "Idea of a University," illustrating it with the homely truth that cattle allowed to graze at will in pasture are always superior to stall-fed animals. Much of the charm of Monsignor Benson, Canon Sheehan and Father Roland Knox lies in their novel and somewhat startling variations of old themes, in the light of their general knowledge of men and affairs. While books like Dr. Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World* show the wonderful possibilities for applying to spiritual subjects interesting facts gleaned in literature and science.

One of the parishioners of Ars, when asked what was most notable in the Curé's sermons, replied that he was always using comparisons. His printed sermons show that these comparisons were made from things familiar to his congregation in their daily lives, or from events which were happening in their own time. In this

as in everything else the saintly Curé followed the example of Our Lord, Who, the discourses in the New Testament show, used this method in His preaching to the Jews. Incidentally it may be said that a most effective manner of securing interest in sermons on the Gospels and Epistles of Sundays and Holydays is to outline the mise-en-scène of Our Lord's sermons and miracles as the Gospel narrative recurs. And in like manner to describe the persons to whom the Apostles' letters were sent, and the circumstances connected with the writing of these Epistles. This gives a touch of human interest that arouses attention, and agreeably opens the way to imparting the lesson aimed at in the sermon.

All our Divine Lord's teachings revolved about the two great commandments—the love of God and our neighbor. By His parables and comparisons, and illustrations through His miracles, He gave a variety to His words that held the interest of His hearers and allowed a constant pressing of the same ideas. A priest's preaching must necessarily embrace the subjects which were His Master's theme, for "on these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets." There need be, however, no fear of monotony in the preaching, or of weariness in the listeners, if the preacher, out of the fulness of his well-stored mind, is able to give to the old truths a new color and tone, and to bring a new angle of view to what may have become familiar from usage.

A landscape with which we have been well acquainted all our lives, takes on new and varied attractiveness from the changing conditions of seasons and weather. To the chance observer there is visible only a certain expanse of sky and earth, but to the eyes of Nature's lover the landscape is seen in a kaleidoscopic beauty which always delights and never wearies. The play of light in early morning, the full radiance of noontime

splendor, the seductive shadows of the twilight—each gives its own charm to the familiar scene.

Moreover, the prospect takes on an utterly different loveliness in the gossamer softness woven over it by the moonlight, or in the rugged beauty of the bulking shapes which the starlight outlines in the night. The rain and snow that blot out the sky, cloak the trees and earth in novel guises, and Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn work their magic in turn on the accustomed view, bringing never-failing joys.

Nature, after all, has only limited resources for embellishment in color combinations and effects, and the pleasures of the eye bear no comparison to the pleasures of the imagination. The preacher, therefore, whose range can embrace the extent of sacred and profane literature, possesses possibilities for new aspects to age-old truths which are as exhaustless as the capabilities of the human mind.

There is first of all the great mine of the Holy Scriptures, wherein he may delve for precious ore by his own exertions, or he may find its treasures minted into shining currency in the wealth of commentaries of skilled scholars. The lives of the Saints, ancient and modern, are a great garden of fruits and flowers whose nourishment and beauty can give to the men and women of our own time comfort and strength.

Besides these two great storehouses, which a long lifetime of sermonizing could not exhaust, there stretches out with ever-widening horizon the prospect of profane literature in prose and poetry. Herein the priest may travel all the days of his life, constantly enriching his mind with treasures. Sometimes he will find, in the most unexpected places, a word or phrase which opens up vistas of thoughts to be used in a sermon. At other times the theme of a novel, or the opinion of a character in a play, or an article in a maga-

zine, will throw new light on a controverted point, or give him a clinching argument. Shakespeare brims over with helps of this sort, and the poems of Robert Browning are full of sermon-texts, and subjects for meditation. The priest who would fulfil his ambition to do good by his sermons must be on the alert in all his readings for what can be of use either for illustration and emphasis in his sermons, or for stimulating his own thoughts along original lines. To be of any profit this material must be filed away under separate headings of topics, or copied into his notebooks immediately after reading, with careful memoranda of his reactions.

There is, however, a selfish side to reading, in which its utilitarian value is only a by-product. The man who possesses a taste for reading has at once a citadel in which he can entrench himself at will against the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and a pavilion of delights to which he can retire when jaded in life's conflict, sure of rejuvenation and entertainment. The question will never be satisfactorily settled, whether greater pleasure is enjoyed by the man who has cultivated a love of reading from his early years, or by him who in mature life has found the fascinating charm of the world of books. The boy or youth, unless he is very precocious, or reads under the careful direction of some skilled elder, is very apt to hurry through his book, intent only on the interest of the narrative. Later, in the light of his own experience in life, and with a mind broadened by all that the years bring, he reads and re-reads, lingering lovingly over the exquisite beauty of description, or the haunting cadence of choice words and perfect phrasing.

Not many youthful minds can appreciate the subtleties of Dickens' characterizations, or the delicious irony and satire of Thackeray that flow with satiny smoothness; or the stately, flawless majesty of Newman's and

Stevenson's march of words; or the magic phrase-weaving of Lafcadio Hearn and Oscar Wilde; or the whimsical humor of Anthony Trollope and Charles Lamb; or the winsome charm of George Eliot and the Brontës; or the works of our own Belloc and Chesterton, the modern gladiators who dominate the field of controversy, the one smashing his opponent with stunning logic, and the other delivering his equally jolting blows with a playful chuckle; or the delectable tales of Ernest Oldmeadow, Compton Mackensie, Roland Knox and the versatile Rudyard Kipling.

It is, however, from the appreciation of these, and their like among less famous authors, that the mature mind distills the elixir which reading is to the lover of books. He it is who knows how to select and enjoy like a connoisseur of wine, the books over which Charles Lamb remarks we should say grace before reading. His trained sense instantly detects the bouquet, and delights in the flavor of real literature, whether it be old or new, and he is not to be deceived by trash that will upset his mental digestion.

To him there is no pleasure comparable to that of finding new joys in re-reading his old book-friends, or, in some new book, to come across haunting echoes of old thrills. As he grows older, and has traveled the roads of literature with both the hurried strides of youth and the sauntering leisure of maturity, he will settle down to the enjoyment of memoirs, biographies and autobiographies. In these he will find the tragedy, and comedy, romance and drama of real life that excel all the imaginative works of the best writers. There too will he meet again, with new interest, the men and women who made history, and whom he has known in the long ago in his textbooks. Garbed often in new and strange apparel, or even stripped for anatomical study, they look out from the pages of their life-stories with

captivating enticement. The priest especially finds a fascinating piquancy in these revealing books of men and motives, because he himself must deal so much with human nature in its primitive activities and reactions.

Much of the pleasure which a book-lover finds in his books comes from the knowledge of his ownership of them. The roisterer who spends his money in lavish entertainment, that he may surround himself with choice revelers, experiences no pleasure of companionship equal to that which the man blessed with a taste for reading enjoys in the society of his books. The joy of possession of the pasha who furnishes his harem from the slave-market can never be comparable to that of the lover of books, as he looks along his shelves at his old and valued friends—each inviting with its special charms—or fondles with caressing hands his latest acquisition, which has cost him, perhaps, much more than the money value expended.

"It is a man's duty to have books. A library is not a luxury but a necessity of life," said Henry Ward Beecher; and in this he voiced a truth which is very evident to every priest. From his first years he should begin to acquire a library. He will naturally begin very modestly and add to his collection by degrees. The nucleus will be formed, of course, by his College and Seminary textbooks. These he will find of great use, not only in preparation for the junior years' examinations but as old familiars to be consulted while continuing his studies. To these should be added a working section of reference books consisting of encyclopedias, one or more of the standard works on the Life of Our Lord, commentaries on the Holy Scriptures, and the best of authorities in the line of study in which he has chosen to perfect himself. In addition to these he will also want to own good editions of the great and the

near-great English authors, and books of current literature, as he learns of their use and value to him for study and recreation.

By our modern method of partial payments for sets of the classics, and because of the moderate priced reprints in single volumes, a priest can provide himself with a general library without any great inconvenience of expense. A careful study of the book reviews in his magazines, and the opinion of those who know, will keep him in touch with what is worth buying in new books. His own good sense, or the wisdom gained from the sad experience of someone else, will make him cautious in business dealings with book-agents, and cause him to confine his trade to reputable houses only.

As the years go on the library will be increased, and correspondingly diminished by a judicious weeding out from time to time. Finally, there comes a time when his collection of books is such that he can be self-reliant, knowing that he is equipped with ammunition for every emergency, as well as supplied with literature which will be an unfailing source of profit and pleasure, and his solace and comfort in sickness and in old age. For, as Montesquieu says: "The love of reading enables a man to exchange the wearisome hours of life, which come to everyone, for hours of delight."

CHAPTER XII

THE BUSY LAST YEAR OF THE SAINT

This and the following chapter constitute an appendix to the life of the Curé d'Ars by the late Monsignor Kirlin. They were in preparation by the author at the time of his death but they were only at the stage of a rough draft when he was called away. They have since been revised and completed by a friend familiar with the intentions of the author. They are now inserted with the hope that the picture they paint of the last days of John Baptist Vianney will compensate for defects and shortcomings which would not have existed had Monsignor Kirlin lived to complete his work.

MOVED as it were, by a presentiment of his death, pilgrims came by thousands to visit the man of God. Most of these wanted to confess to him. Even with the help of his missionaries he could hardly attend to them all. Many of them waited patiently even for days to get an opportunity to talk to him alone. But their pious desire to see and consult the old priest certainly hastened his end.

A few months before the Saint's death, a writer came to the church one afternoon. "The Curé," he tells us, "was in his confessional. I had hardly knelt down when I heard a sob. Was it a cry as of one in pain or was it a cry of love? Every ten minutes the same sob was repeated. Fatigue drew this plaintive cry from his breast, but the cry of suffering became a cry of love and as it were the effort of a soul suffocated by the things of earth to open for itself a passage to heaven."

In fact his strength decreased rapidly. His voice

could hardly be heard during the catechism and the sermons. They were only a series of exclamations that ended in tears. Now and then "a cough that seemed like a sob would betray his pain, but once more his love and zeal for souls would conquer his lassitude."

This terrible cough, dry and hacking, saddened everyone. He himself said of it with his sweet humorous smile: "This cough is annoying, it takes all my time." Finally he had become so weak that he was obliged to drink a little milk before retiring at night. But this was the only change he accepted from his usual diet. On certain days he would not take anything until night. "My poor Catherine," he said to his housekeeper, "I am very tired." "Sit down a moment, Curé," she replied; "I will heat your milk." "No; it is my bed I need." Catherine nevertheless went to prepare the milk. On bringing it to him, she found him preparing to return to the church. Then she boldly insisted: "Take this, M. le Curé; you will not be able to wait until night." He would not. She followed him. "Oh, the pilgrims will see you," he said. But as Catherine still insisted, he drank the milk; then at night he said to his inexorable infirmarian: "I really believe that without your cup of milk I could not have finished the day."

Five years before his death, when he felt his fatigue increasing, he used to say in his picturesque way: "My head swims." Although M. Toccanier had obtained for him, without his permission, a dispensation from the breviary, he recited it nearly every day, but not on his knees as he was wont to do all his life. He continued to treat his body mercilessly. In 1858, as he was leaving The Providence, he fell on the stairs and hurt his leg. He neglected it until it developed into a painful ulcer. But this was of little consequence to him. He was dreaming only of penances and macerations and

wished to take the discipline even to the last week. He grieved at not being able to scourge himself as heretofore. "A few days before his death," says M. Pages, "he sent me to Lyons and, as I was starting, commissioned me to bring him a chain two feet long and a little heavier than a watch chain. 'If you do not bring it,' said the servant of God, 'I shall have to use another I have here which is heavier.' And he used this discipline to arouse himself the following day."

But he was worn out. In spite of his heroic willpower, he was obliged to give up. When his strength betrayed him, he said sadly: "We will rest in the other life." In fact, he had no rest in this life—his short nights were spent tossing in the hard bed, bathed in sweat, and his chest torn by his terrible coughing. After three or four hours of this agony, when his nerves began to relax, he had to get up and go to the crowd of pilgrims and sinners who were waiting for the "Saint." "I felt like sleeping this morning," he said one day, "but I did not hesitate to rise; it is so important the salvation of these souls." The body, however, would take its revenge, and often between four and five in the morning he appeared to drop into a sleep of exhaustion. The pilgrims were hushed to silence in order to let him have a little rest. "Father," he was once asked, "if God gave you the choice of entering heaven at once or of continuing to work for the salvation of souls, which would you choose?" "I would continue," he replies. "But in heaven," rejoined the questioner, "the saints are so happy. No more trials, no more temptations." "Yes," he answered, "the saints are happy, but they live on their incomes. They have worked hard, since God punishes sloth and rewards labor; but they cannot, like us, by labor and suffering, save souls to God." "If God left you here till the end of the world," he was reminded, "you would

have plenty of time. You would not rise this morning." "Oh, yes, my friend," he retorted, "I should always rise at midnight. It isn't fatigue that frightens me; I should be the happiest of priests if it were not for the thought that I shall have to appear as Curé before the tribunal of God." And two great tears rolled down his cheeks.

Although his sufferings were constantly increasing, he never showed anyone but a calm and smiling countenance and went on with his pastoral activities. On the second of April, 1859, he opened a "drive" for the construction of a beautiful church to St. Philomena, and at the head of the list he wrote his name down for one thousand francs. At Easter time he gathered around him all the men and boys of the parish who had made their Easter duty. He compared himself to Moses assembling Israel before his death. Hearing the few words that he said and seeing him so worn out and broken, several of the men could not help thinking that the man of God had sung his *Nunc dimittis*.

More and more Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist fascinated him. Whenever he was preaching he always returned to the subject of the Real Presence. Then, explaining once more the Sacrament of Love, he became all transfigured and beautiful tears of joy fell from his eyes. By this time he enjoyed an abiding peace. He had conquered all obstacles. He was surrounded by his missionaries, whom he called his sons and who called him Father. To the end he showed to everybody his exquisite and sympathetic tenderness.

One day, a few months before he died, he received two poor women who had arrived half frozen from the snow and the cold. The Saint tried to build a little fire in his own room to comfort them but he could not succeed because the wood was damp. "I beg of you,"

said one of the women, "don't bother about the fire; I am accustomed to the cold; but warm my poor soul with a few sparks of faith and hope."

Since 1853 the holy Curé had had a strong presentiment of his death and often spoke of it. He frequently said: "We are going; we must die—and soon." When in 1858 he was given a beautiful ribbon to hold the ostensorium at the procession of Corpus Christi, he said with his usual smile: "I shall not use it more than twice." On another occasion he sent Catherine for a rental of twenty cents a day that was given him for charity. "It will be the last time," he said with assurance. Again, a woman having come to him for confession, he said to her when she was leaving: "Yes, yes, my child, in three weeks we shall see each other again." In fact, the woman died almost at the same time as the Saint, so that they met in Heaven.

The last month of his life was torrid. The little church, filled from morning till evening with pilgrims, was a place of suffocation. The pilgrims could get out occasionally to get some fresh air, but the "martyr of the confessional" stayed in all the time. "It would not be a bad thing for a priest to die by reason of trials and sufferings endured for God and souls." His words and his dream of self immolation were soon to be realized.

On July 29th, he felt very sick. He could not stay in the church. Burning with fever, he tried, however, to teach his catechism class. But although he could not be heard, the people knew the subject he was teaching, since he kept turning towards the Tabernacle his face bathed in tears. At night he tried to rest, but an hour after midnight he complained of the cold and asked for Catherine. "This is my *poor* end," he whispered. "You must send for the Curé of Jassans." Brother Jerome suggested a doctor. "It is useless," was the answer; "the doctor can do nothing." In his

turn M. Toccanier suggested prayer to St. Philomena. "No," said he with a smile, "St. Philomena can do nothing."

Confessor and doctor arrived at sunrise. The doctor sadly took note of the Saint's great weakness. He said that having no strength to resist, he could not endure continuance of the high temperature. The Saint utterly surrendered himself to the care of his friends. It was difficult before, to nurse him. All his life he had resisted the pious strategy of poor souls who tried to give a little comfort to their Saint. But now he was docile and accepted, knowing the end was near, everything they suggested to help him. Only once when the Sister nursing him wished to fan away the flies from his face bathed in sweat, he said: "Leave me with my poor flies; there is nothing annoying except sin."

After his death, the confessor, when asked about the last moments, stated that he was perfectly conscious to the very end. "He confessed to me with his usual piety, without fear or trouble. He expressed no desire to get well. The demon was not allowed to trouble him at the supreme moment. His greatest apprehension had been to fall into despair in his last moments, but now the fear of death which he had manifested so strongly, had entirely disappeared. Having tasted the bitterness of this earthly exile, he was now enjoying the delights of death, realizing in himself the truth of his own words, 'How sweet to die when one has lived on the cross.' "

Of course all the parish and all the neighborhood were in incredible anxiety. All vied for the honor of watching him, though his desire was to be left alone. The pilgrims continued to arrive and besieged the door of the presbytery, waiting anxiously for news, asking at least for a benediction, which he gave without saying a word. It was a heart-breaking spectacle

to see the crowd of pilgrims kneeling and making the sign of the Cross when the little bell rang to warn them that the dying Saint blessed them.

In the afternoon of the last day his confessor administered to him the Last Sacraments. "How good God is," said the Curé, resuming one of his most familiar sayings. "When we cannot go to Him, He comes to us." After he had received the sacraments, he said with a faint voice: "We celebrate today the translation of the relics of St. Stephen. This Saint, while still on earth, saw the heavens open." Then our Saint raised his eyes beaming with joy to heaven.

The notary asked him where he wanted to be buried. "In Ars," he replied, "but my body is not of much consequence." The end was coming rapidly. On Thursday morning, August 4, 1859, at two in the morning, when his assistant had just said the words of the Commendation of the Soul, "May the angels meet him and introduce him to the heavenly Jerusalem," he gave up his soul to God.

Such was the end of such a life. Toil, self-sacrifice, mortification, borne to the extreme limits of human endurance. After the long day's work, the good servant had entered his eternal rest, leaving behind him a memory of virtue and examples capable of fostering sacrifice and devotion in all generations of his fellow priests whom he had loved with such remarkable intensity and helped with all his supernatural powers.

CHAPTER XIII

THE EVERLASTING GLORY

"WELL done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." By these words the Bishop of Belley began the eulogy of the deceased Curé d'Ars. At last, the long life of penance was over, the time of reward had come. Immediately after the death of the man of God the crowd began to gather from all the corners of the country to behold the emaciated body that for so long had been animated by an indomitable soul. To satisfy the pious curiosity of the pilgrims, the body of the Curé d'Ars, vested as usual in soutane, rochet and stole, was exposed for the veneration of the faithful. His face, calm and serene, was enlightened by this dazzling light of eternity which he seemed now to contemplate in an endless ecstasy.

There was a continuous procession of people who wanted to touch objects to the sacred body. Four persons stationed near the corpse did not cease for two days to touch the precious relic with all kinds of objects. In the presbytery a special guard was soon established, as the relic-hunters did not hesitate to take any of the Curé d'Ars' possessions. Many thousands filed by the sacred body. There was only one interruption, during which, for the first time, a photograph was taken of the Curé d'Ars.

On August 6, an immense crowd of faithful, headed by three hundred priests and Religious, formed in procession to carry the Curé d'Ars to his last resting-

place. When the pall-bearers began to move the coffin, which was not covered, an irresistible movement swayed the crowd. It was the same commotion that stirred the pilgrims when the servant of God came out of the presbytery at one o'clock in the morning to hear confessions. But this time the holy priest was to be carried in triumph through the streets of his well-loved village. Between two rows of silent mourners the procession passed. Behind the little girls in white, and the clergy, the heavy coffin of lead and oak was carried by some priests, the Brothers of the Holy Family and the young men of the parish. There was a universal impression of sadness as if at the parting of a father. Most of the parishioners fell on their knees when the coffin was carried through their midst. A few indifferent ones would try to resist this atmosphere of recollection but could not help recognizing that the Curé d'Ars was a saint. One of them underwent a complete change and became a convert from that very moment. Far away, in all the churches of the surrounding villages, the bells were tolling the sad event.

In the public square of the village, at the foot of the Calvary, Bishop Langalerie, who presided at the funeral, delivered the eulogy of the servant of God: "'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' Be silent, my brothers, listen well, pious brethren, whom reverence and sorrow have brought in such large crowds to this imposing ceremony. I repeat those words of the holy Gospel; I ask you is there among you anyone who does not seem to hear them uttered by Our Lord Himself at the moment when the beautiful soul of our holy Curé appeared before his Divine Master? Let us meditate a few moments, my dear brethren, on this word so sweet and cherished, which is our hope and our consolation. I

will add that it contains a salutary warning in the name of him who cannot speak to you henceforth but by the example of his life and probably also by the marvels wrought at his tomb. How many years, how many centuries perhaps, since we have seen a busy life like this, as fruitfully, as holily, as continuously occupied in the service of God? The Curé d'Ars cannot be replaced. God himself in the interest of His glory does not wish to multiply these prodigies of grace and of sanctity. France has lost a priest who did it honor and whom people came to visit and consult from every province. 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'; your work is done, you have accomplished enough, labored enough; come, here is your recompense and the price of your labors. And know it well, dear and venerated Curé, that the most beautiful day, the most desired of my episcopate, would be the one whereon the infallible voice of the Church would permit me solemnly to acclaim you and to sing in your honor, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'"

The little church of Ars was, of course, too small to hold all the audience. Only the clergy and relatives of the deceased were admitted. The crowd heard the Mass from outside, and a religious silence hovered over the whole village when the bell announced the Consecration. The Bishop gave the Absolution and for ten days the body was kept in front of the confessional, now empty, of the Curé d'Ars. During these ten days the people of the parish maintained a watch day and night until the 14th of August. Then the body was lowered into a vault in the middle of the church. There the servant of God was to lie for forty years. As in the fervent days of the Middle Ages there were endless demands, discussions and even fights about the

relics of the Saint. The people of Dardilly, the native parish of the Curé d'Ars, did not lose any time in asking for the body of "their" Saint or at least for his heart, but the whole population of Ars was ready to fight by all means to keep the body and the heart of their beloved Pastor. Before any decision of the Church, the pilgrimage had begun. Those who came before to hear lessons of sanctity would come now with flowers and wreaths and burning candles to honor and to pray. This premature veneration was prevented by the missionaries as much as they could, in order to obey the decision of the Church, who forbids the anticipation of the official judgment of sanctity. The Bishop wanted to get this judgment as soon as possible. On the 21st of November, 1862, an ecclesiastical tribunal began to investigate the life, the virtues, the miracles and the writings of the servant of God.

Two hundred sittings were necessary to gather the material of the process called "Ordinary"; sixty-six witnesses made sworn statements. The written material submitted to the Sacred Congregation of Rites contained 1674 pages. Then in March, 1865, the Pope named Cardinal Villecourt Postulator of the Cause of Ars and had the French document translated into Italian. Instead of allowing ten years, as usual, between the "Ordinary" and the Apostolic Process, the Pope proceeded almost immediately because, having known the reputation of the Curé d'Ars, he personally wished to glorify him as soon as possible.

After unforeseen delays caused by the Council of the Vatican, the war between France and Prussia and the spoliation of Rome by the troops of Victor Emmanuel, the Pope was able in October, 1872, to set in motion the process of Beatification. Thus, John Mary Baptist Vianney was declared Venerable. In the mean-

while Pope Pius IX had died and when, after twelve years, the Apostolic Process was over, Pope Leo XIII ratified all the sessions. This Pope, like his predecessors, had a great veneration for the Curé d'Ars, whom he called "The Shining Light of France," but it was to be the honor of a Pope who had been himself a village pastor to glorify John Mary Baptist Vianney. On January 26, 1904, Pope Pius X, after examining the miracles of the Venerable Vianney and especially two of them, decided to proclaim his decision to beatify him. One year afterward, on January 8, 1905, the title of Blessed was officially bestowed upon the Curé d'Ars.

In Rome, ever accustomed to great solemnities, the ceremony of the Beatification had a particular splendor. Bishop Luçon had given out 30,000 tickets of admission to St. Peter's. All the colleges, the pastors, the Communities had come to honor a priest of France entering into his official glory. When during the reading of the Brief of Beatification the curtain fell unveiling the portrait of the apotheosis, "the Curé d'Ars taking his flight toward heaven," a wave of emotion swept over the audience. All the priests particularly felt the honor bestowed upon one of them; and they saw in it the glorification of the daily and humble duty of the priest, lost in the country and working, very often in unpleasant circumstances and environment, to preserve the faith and the morals of his flock.

For the first time, the relics of the Curé d'Ars were officially honored in the Church. A few months before the beatification, the body of Saint John Mary Baptist Vianney had been taken from the tomb and found almost intact. The skin was livid and the flesh almost dry; the heart was found intact and was preserved apart. The body was placed in a beautiful reliquary

given by the priests of France; to shelter these precious treasures of sanctity a beautiful church was erected in Ars. The funds were obtained by Father Toccanier, who visited all the great parishes in France. The priedieu and the watch of the Curé d'Ars put in a lottery had brought a hundred thousand francs, and now the body of the Blessed is resting united in glory with the dear little Saint Philomena to whom he had accredited so many of his own miracles.

The last act of the great apotheosis took place on May 1, 1925, when the humble priest received, under the illuminated dome of St. Peter's at Rome, the supreme honor of canonization. It was a fortnight after the canonization of the Little Flower. The humble French Carmelite loaned, as it were, all the settings of her own glorification to her fellow-citizen. Moreover, the French Carmelites of Lisieux had borne a great part of the expense of the canonization and so, in the Basilica of St. Peter's, illuminated outside as in the old days, was proclaimed the last decision of the Church concerning the sanctity of her most devoted servant. Rome could love the Curé d'Ars. He had loved Rome and the Pope with a most filial affection and a most exquisite tenderness. All his life he had given the example of this affection and submission to all, even to the smaller things, that pertained to the Rome of his dream and to the Popes of his heart. Now, Rome officially recognized the heroic virtues of her faithful servant, and set him up as an example of priestly life and of an untiring devotion to his flock.

Sixty-eight years had passed since the Curé d'Ars' death. According to the words of Scripture, "the memory of the Saints is in veneration." The story of his life was presented as a thesis of the doctorate in the University of Paris, and was translated into all languages. This "Gospel in action" brings to all the

world a message of the humble virtues, of the austere penances, of the numberless heart-breaks and mortifications that are and will be up to the end of the world the narrow gate through which priests will enter the eternal splendor of the House of their Father.

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